PRACTICAL DISCOURSES Upon several Divine Subjects.

VOL. II.

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Written by JOHN NORRIS, M. A. Rector of *Bemerton* near *Sarum*.

The Third Edition.

Licens'd, *July* 16. 1691. Z. Isham.

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Printed for S. Manship at the *Ship* near the *Royal Exchange* in *Cornhil*, 1697.

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TO THE

Right Reverend Father in God,

RICHARD,

Lord Biſhop of *Bath* and *Wells.*

My Lord,

THE peculiar Honour I juſtly have for your Perſonal Worth concurring with that Reverence I owe to your Epiſcopal Character, and that happy Relation wherein I now ſtand to you as my Dioceſan, obliges me to lay theſe Papers at your Lordſhip's Feet; and that which your Eminent *Greatneſs* has made a *Debt*, your no leſs Illuſtrious *Goodneſs* incourages me to *Pay*. Upon which two inducements (the greateſt that can be even in Religious as well as Human Addreſſes) I humbly preſume to tender theſe Plain Diſcourſes to your Lordſhips favour-

able Peruſal and Acceptance, which as they are wholly *deſigned*, ſo I hope are in ſome meaſure *fitted* for the Advantage of the Publick; not ſo much in reſpect of Notion and Speculation, but what is a great deal more wanted in this very degenerate, tho otherwiſe highly Improved Age, the promotion of Piety and good Life. Which great and excellent end that your Lordſhip may yet much better promote, both by the Prudence of your Government, and by the Brightneſs and Authority of your high Example, to the Honour and Intereſt of our moſt excellent Church, and the Glory of our common Lord and Maſter, ſhall be the Conſtant and Zealous Prayer of him whoſe great Ambition is to be eſteemed

Your Lordſhip's

Moſt Humble and Dutiful Servant,

J. NORRIS.

TO THE READER.

Since the Publication of my former Discourses upon the Beatitudes, having received some Intimations, that 'tis the earnest desire of several Worthy Persons to see some more of my Practical Discourses; for the gratification of their Pious Curiosity, and for the general Advantage of all other well inclined Persons, I have been perswaded to make a Scrutiny among my Papers, and to pick out a Set of such Discourses as are of the most Practical *Composure, and most apt to season the Mind of the Reader with a Tincture of Piety and Vertue: And these I think are of this Character, which I therefore here communicate to the World in the same Matter and Dress for the Main, wherein they were first* Penn'd *and* Preach'd, *only bestowing upon them the advantage of a* Review, *that so they might have that Accuracy and Correctness as might fit them for a Publick Appearance.*

I am not insensible how well furnished the Present Age is with Provisions of this kind; so far from that, that I think we have in this respect much

much the Advantage above any Age or Place in the World: And I think withal, that if there were a Choice Collection made of our Engliſh *Sermons, eſpecially of the Later times, it might deſerve to wear the* Honourable Chain *in our Publick Libraries, as well as any the beſt Curioſities we have there, and indeed to turn out a great many dull Wormeaten Authors, which fill our Stalls, as many Perſons do the World, Idly and Inſignificantly, and are not worth the* Room *they take up. And I further think, that if the Seleƈteſt parts of theſe our Modern Sermons were ranged under certain Heads, and judiciouſly ſorted and diſpoſed in order, out of theſe Materials might be framed far the beſt* Body *of* Divinity, *both for the Rational and for the Perſwaſive part, that is in the World. And 'tis great Pity but that a convenient number of competent Undertakers (for I think it would be too great a Task for any one Perſon) would agree together upon the Performance. It would I am perſwaded be a work of excellent Uſe as well as Curioſity, and withal a ſtanding Monument of Shame and Condemnation to thoſe of our Diſſenters, who are ſo Silly and ſo Impudent, as to make this one of their Pleas for leaving the* Church, *becauſe they have better Preaching in a* Conventicle.

But leaſt this ſhould be turned as an Objeƈtion againſt the preſent performance, that the Age is ſo rich in theſe Proviſions, I conſider withal

on

on the other side, how much it ſtands in need of them: Its Supplies indeed are great, but its Neceſſities are as great and greater; and till Men come to be perſwaded to live better than they now do, more like Men, *and more like* Chriſtians, *I think further Addreſſes of this Nature will be always Seaſonable, and will be ſo far from needing an* Apology, *that they will deſerve to be* incouraged.

But there is ſomething elſe that needs it very much, and that is, the unproficiency *of the World under ſuch extraordinary Advantages. 'Tis indeed a thing of ſtrange Conſideration, and what I have often admired at, that conſidering what excellent* Preaching *and* Writing *there is now in the World, the World ſhould be no better than it is; that there ſhould be ſo much good Diſcourſing, and ſo little good Living; that the Inſtrument of Religion ſhould be ſo much Improved, and Religion it ſelf ſo much Decayed.*

It muſt be allowed that the preſent Age has Advantages of both ſorts, Preaching *and* Writing, *far beyond what former Ages could ever boaſt of; and that Chriſtians now have Aſſiſtances almoſt as much beyond thoſe of the Primitive Chriſtians, as theirs were beyond thoſe of the* Heathen *World; and yet (which is both ſtrange and lamentable to conſider,) they excelled us as much in* Goodneſs, *as we do them in Learning*

and Knowledge, and were much better without theſe Advantages than we are with them. No Learning like Modern Learning, no Reaſoning like Modern Reaſoning, and yet no Chriſtianity like Primitive Chriſtianity. Now indeed Chriſtianity is better underſtood, and better defended, and the Rules of it more rationally inforced, but then 'twas better Practiſed: Now we Diſcourſe better, but we Live worſe.

What ſhall *we, what* can *we ſay to theſe things? It is our great* Shame, *and it will be our* Condemnation: *But we muſt not give over Medicinal Applications, though the Diſeaſe ſeems not to yield to them, but rather to rage and increaſe under them; for though we are really worſe under theſe great Aſſiſtances, yet I hope 'tis not they that contribute to make us ſo; and if the World be ſo bad* with *them, 'tis to be feared it would be in a much worſe Condition* without *them. The Means are therefore to be continued, whatever the Event and Succeſs be, which is* God's *concern, not* ours. *And I further conſider, that the badneſs of the Age under the greateſt helps to Goodneſs is ſo far from being a reaſonable diſcouragement againſt endeavours of Reformation, that there is great reaſon to think that God reſerves the beſt Remedies and Aſſiſtances againſt the worſt Times, that when the Malignity of the Contagion is at ſtrongeſt, it may have a Proportionable Antidote.*

I am not ſo vain as to think my ſelf intereſſed in this laſt Conſideration, any further than as it may ſerve me with an Anſwer to an Objection, wherein it is pretended, that Men are the worſe for having ſo much Application made to them for their Recovery, that they ſuffer in their Morals by being over-tutour'd, *as ſome Men do in their Health by being* over-Phyſick'd: *The ground of which Objection proceeds I ſuppoſe upon this Obſervation, that when there are the greateſt helps and advantages to goodneſs, the Age is then always worſt. The Obſervation I confeſs is too true, but the Conſequence that is made from it, may I conceive be taken off, by ſuppoſing that this comes to paſs by the ſpecial Aſſignment of God's Providence, reſerving the beſt aſſiſtances againſt the worſt times, and not by any Natural Connexion that is between the things themſelves in order to ſuch a Juncture.*

Upon theſe Conſiderations I am encouraged to ſend theſe Diſcourſes abroad, having this only to ſay concerning them, that as the Subjects of them are of extraordinary importance, ſo I think they do not fall very much beneath what they undertake for in their ſeveral Titles; that they conſiſt of very weighty and ſerious matter, and are indifferently Correct as to their Compoſiton; that they ſpeak both to the Reaſon *and*

to

to the Affection *of the Reader, and are in good measure fitted both to Convince and to Perswade: In short, that they may be read with a great deal of* Profit, *and not without some* Entertainment. *The former is the more considerable end, and 'tis what I mainly aim at; I wish the Reader may do the same, and when both of us contur in so laudable an End, 'tis to be hoped the Blessing of God will not be wanting; and I pray God it may not.*

J. NORRIS.

A DISCOURSE CONCERNING *Worldly and Divine Wiſdom.*

VOL. II.

Luke 16. 8.

The Children of this World are in their Generation Wiſer than the Children of Light.

OF all the infinite Follies incident to Mankind, there is none that may more juſtly imploy both our Pity and our Admiration than an Ill timed, Miſplaced and Diſproportionate *Wiſdom.* The thorough Fool is not nigh ſo great a Prodigy as the Half-wiſe Man; nor is a ſtark uniform Ignorance ſo myſterious and

and unaccountable as an uneven misconducted Prudence. Of this latter we may conceive Two sorts, either a proposal of a wrong End, or an undue prosecution of a right one. In the former, the Man is supposed to be right enough in his *Means*, but to be wrong in his *End*; in the latter, he is supposed to be as right in his *End*, but to be wrong in his *Means*. In the former, we consider the Man as Wise in little things, and a Fool in great concerns; Wise where Wisdom might be spared, and a Fool where 'tis highly necessary. In the latter, we consider him as not *so* wise in great things, as either himself or another is in little things. And this I take to be a stranger sort of Folly than the former; for here the Man is supposed to be so wise, as to have aim'd at the true Mark, and to have fixed upon a right End, but yet withal at the same time to be so much a Fool, as not to prosecute this right End as prudently and carefully as the other does a wrong one; which truly is a very odd Combination. 'Tis a great Folly not to propose a good End, and he that fails in this part, can never expect to have any thing orderly and regular in the whole course of his Life: Such a Man (if he deserve that Name) lives *Backward*, and the longer he lives, and the more active and busie he is, the more he is led out of his way, and the further

further he is from his Journey's End. A Man were better have no Mark before him, but live at *Rovers*, without any End or Deſign at all, than to propoſe an End to himſelf that is not good. The former indeed ſeems to be more ſottiſh and ſtupid, and to have leſs of Soul and Thought in it; but the latter, if I miſtake not, is more dangerous and miſchievous, and will lead a Man into more fatal Miſcarriages.

But though it be ſo great a Folly not to propoſe a good End, yet it ſeems a much *ſtranger* Folly not to proſecute it when you have propoſed it, and when one has attained ſo far, not to proceed further: The Reaſon may be obvious why a Man does not propoſe a good End, for he may want clearneſs of Underſtanding to diſcern which is ſo. But he that has propoſed aright, ſhews by his very doing ſo, that he does not want that. The rightneſs of his Aim ſufficiently argues the goodneſs of his Eye-ſight, and why then he ſhould not proſecute his well-choſen End, is ſomewhat unaccountable: And beſides, the greatneſs and the goodneſs of the End, has a natural and genuin efficacy both to *quicken* and to *regulate* the execution of it; and the more conſiderable the End is, the more it has of this Influence. As the Means themſelves do take their meaſure from the End, ſo does the *execution* of them too, and

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the more weighty and concerning is the End propoſed, the more preſſing and urging is the engagement that lies upon the Propoſer, both to chuſe fit and proper Means for the compaſſing it, and to be diligent in the uſe and application of them when choſen. So that whether we regard that rational Light and diſcernment of Mind which he diſcovers himſelf to be Maſter of that propoſes a right End, or that aid and aſſiſtance which is communicated to him from the weight and moment of the End it ſelf, (which cannot but help on its own proſecution,) the Folly of not proſecuting a well-propoſed End, will appear to be of all others the moſt ſtrange and amazing.

And yet this is that Folly which is more or leſs chargeable upon the Wiſeſt of Men; thoſe who have duly conſidered, and taken a juſt meaſure both of themſelves and of the World without them; that have well examined and ſifted out the capacities of their Nature, and the utter inſufficiency of all created Good to fill thoſe Capacities; thoſe that have duly prized and valued the whole *Inventory* of this Worlds Goods, and have fixed a general Inſcription of *Vanity* upon them all, and who accordingly upon the ſtrength of this Conviction, have gone out of the Circle of this World for their Happineſs, and have propoſed to themſelves the ſupream

ſupream Good for their End, and for the wiſdom of this their Choice, are ſtiled *Children of Light*: Even theſe Men are chargeable with this ſtrange Folly, and it is here actually charged upon them by the eternal and ſubſtantial Wiſdom of God in this his weighty Remark upon the Politick Stratagem of the unjuſt Steward, *The Children of this World are in their Generation, wiſer than the Children of Light.*

In the Words there is ſomething *implied*, and ſomething directly *aſſerted*. 'Tis implied,

1. That there are a ſort of Men who are Children of this World, that is, who make the Good of this World their End, and ſeek no further for their Reſt and Happineſs. 'Tis implied again on the other ſide,

2. That there are a ſort of Men who are Children of Light, who look beyond this Sphere of Vanity, and black Vale of Miſery, and propoſe to themſelves the Beatitudes of another Life, as their true and laſt End; and theſe our Lord calls *Children of Light*, both from the *Object* of their Choice, (the Glories of Heaven being frequently repreſented in Scripture under the Symbol of Light,) and from their *Wiſdom* in chuſing it. 'Tis implied again,

3. That the former of theſe notwithſtanding the preference here given them, do not

act

act according to the measures of true Wisdom; and therefore our Lord does not say *absolutely* that they are Wise, but only that they are Wiser in their *Generation*.

4. The thing directly asserted by our Lord is this, That notwithstanding their want of true Wisdom, (that Wisdom which is from above) they are however wiser in *their Generation* than the Children of Light. That is, that however they are befool'd in the Choice of their End, yet they make more prudent Provisions for its Attainment and Security, and prosecute it by more apt and agreeable Means, and with greater Cunning and Diligence than they who have chosen a better, do theirs. And in this the Children of this World, though great Fools, are yet in their Generation, in their way and manner, Wiser than the Children of Light.

These I shall make distinct Subjects of Discourse; to each of which I shall speak according to the present Order.

And first of all, 'tis implied, that there are a sort of Men, who are Children of this World, who make the Good of this World their End, and seek no further for their Rest and Happiness. 'Tis I confess strange that there should be any such, considering that the World is no proper Boundary for the Soul even in its *Natural* Capacity, much less in its *Spiritual*: 'Tis too cheap and inconsiderable

derable a Good for an Immortal Spirit, much more for a Divine Nature. And therefore did not the Commonneſs of the thing take off from the Wonder, 'twould ſeem no doubt as great a Prodigy to ſee a Man make the World his End, as to ſee a Stone hang in the Air. For what is it elſe for a Man, the weight of whoſe Nature preſſes hard towards a ſtable and never failing Center, to ſtop ſhort in a fluid and yielding Medium, and take up with the ſlender ſtays of Vanity, and lean upon the Dream of a Shadow? I ſay, why is not this to be look'd upon as equally ſtrange and preternatural, as a Stone's hanging in the Air? Is not the Air as proper a Boundary for a *Stone*, as the World is for a *Soul*? And why then is not one as ſtrange as the other? For in the Firſt place, one would think it next to impoſſible, that a Man who thinks at all, ſhould not conſider frequently and thoroughly the vanity and emptineſs of all Worldly Good, the ſhortneſs and uncertainty of Life, the certainty of Dying, and the uncertainty of the Time when; the Immortality of the Soul, the doubtful and momentous Iſſues of Eternity, the Terrours of Damnation, and the Glorious things which are ſpoken, and which cannot be uttered of the City of God. Theſe are Meditations ſo very obvious, ſo almoſt unavoidable, and that ſo block up a Mans

way; and besides they are so very important and concerning, that for my part I wonder how a Man can think of any thing else. And if a Man does consider and revolve these things, one would think it yet more impossible that he should make so vain a thing as this World, his End; that he should think of Building Tabernacles of Rest on this side the Grave, and say, *it is good to be here.* So that upon the whole matter, were a Man put to the Question, whether 'twere possible that a Rational and Thinking Creature as Man is, should be so far a Child of this World, as to make the Good of it his End, and seek no further for Rest and Happiness; were a Man I say to consider this only in Notion and Theory, without having any recourse to Observation and Experience, he would go nigh to resolve the Question in the Negative, and think it impossible that he who is capable of Chusing at all, should Chuse so ill.

But, whether 'tis that Men do not heartily believe such a thing as a future state of Happiness and Misery; or if they do, that they do not actually and seriously consider it, but suffer it to lye dormant and unactive within them, and so are as little affected with it, as if they did not believe it; or that they look upon it through that End of the *Perspective* which represents it as a great way off, and so are more vigorously drawn by the

the Nearer, though Leſſer Loadſtone; or whatever other cauſe may be aſſigned for it, we are too well aſſured from Experience, that there are ſuch Men in the World: Men, who going through the Vale of Miſery, uſe it not only as a Well to refreſh and allay, but fully to quench and ſatisfie their Thirſt; *Pſal.* 84. 6. τὰ ἐπίγεια φρονοῦντες, as the Apoſtle Phraſes it, *who mind and reliſh Earthly things*, Phil. 3. 19. who make the Good of this World their laſt Aim, the Sum total of their Wiſhes, the upſhot of their Deſires and Expectations, their End: Who love it as they are Commanded to love God, with all their Heart, Soul, Mind and Strength, who reſt and lean upon the World with the whole ſtreſs and full weight of their Being, who out-do the Curſe of the Serpent, and whoſe very *Soul* cleaves to the Duſt.

For I demand, Is not the Intereſt of this Animal Life, the great Governing Principle of the World? Are not the Policies of the Stateſman, and the little Under-crafts of the Plebeian, all put into Motion by this Spring, and all guided and determined by this Meaſure? Is not every thing almoſt reckoned Profitable only ſo far as it conduces to ſome Temporal Intereſt, inſomuch, that the very Name *Intereſt*, is almoſt appropriated to Worldly Advantage? And is not this the great Bias of Mankind? Is not moſt of the

Noiſe and Buſtle that is in the World, about the World it ſelf, who ſhall have the greateſt Share of it, and make the greateſt Figure in it? Do we not ſee Men all ſet and intent upon the World, that lay themſelves out wholly upon it, and that can reliſh nothing but what has relation to it? Men that ſeem to grow into the Soil where they dwell, and to have their Heads and Hearts faſtened to the Ground with as many Cords and Fibres, as the Root of a Tree; and that ſeem to be ſtaked down and nailed faſt to the Earth, and that can no more be moved from it, than the Earth it ſelf can from its Center: In one Word, Men of whom it may be ſaid without Cenſure, that the World is their *God*, and its Pleaſures, Honours, and Profit, their *Trinity*.

Nor is this matter of *Practice* only, but of *Opinion* too; for we know there have been ſome among the Antient Philoſophers, who have expreſly taught, that the End of Man, the *Totum Hominis*, lies in the Good of the Animal Life, in the Pleaſure of the groſſer Senſes. Thus we know did *Ariſtippus*, *Cyrenæus*, and a whole Sect of Philoſophers after him, called *Cyrenaici*; which Opinion is alſo charged upon *Epicurus* by *Cicero*, and by many of the Fathers of the Church: And the Charge is ſtill believed and entertained among many Perſons of ſufficient Learning and

and Worth, notwithſtanding the favourable and plauſible Plea *Monſieur Gaſſendi* has offered in the behalf of his Maſter. But the beſt Plea is, that theſe are Pardonable in compariſon of thoſe who enjoy the Advantages of a Revealed Religion, and that in its laſt Perfection and Conſummation too, and yet take no higher Aim than at the Good of this World, and in direct Contradiction to our Saviours Aphoriſm, think that the *Life*, that is, the true Intereſt and Happineſs of Man *does* conſiſt in the Abundance of things which he poſſeſſes, *Luke* 12. 15.

To our Experience, we may add the Atteſtations of Scripture, which gives ſeveral intimations of this low-ſunk, wretched and deplorable Degeneracy of Soul. To inſtance in a few, does not *Job* ſay in vindication of his Integrity, *If I have made Gold my Hope, or have ſaid to the Fine Gold, thou art my Confidence?* Job 31. 24. Imploying that ſome there were that did ſo. And does not the Pſalmiſt ſay, *Pſal.* 52. 8. *Lo this is the Man that took not God for his Strength, but truſted in the multitude of his Riches, and ſtrengthened himſelf in his Wickedneſs?* And does not the Apoſtle tell us of ſome *whoſe God is their Belly*, Phil. 3. 19. and of others, *whoſe Godlineſs is their Gain?* 1 Tim. 6. 5. And what elſe does the Apoſtle mean, when he ſays of *Covetouſneſs*, that it is *Idolatry?* Does he not

thereby intimate, that the Covetous Wretch not only delights in his Poſſeſſions, and loves to count over his Heaps, (for this a Man may do without being an Idolater,) but that he places his End and chief Happineſs in his Treaſures, that he falls down and adores his Golden Calf; and in the forementioned Phraſe of *Job*, makes Gold his *Hope*, and ſays to the Fine Gold, Thou art my *Confidence?*

But the Minds of Men (thanks be to God) are not all under this Eclypſe, nor is this Darkneſs ſpread over the whole Face of the Deep; Light and Darkneſs divide the Moral as well as the Natural World, though with the difference of unequal Proportions; the Darker is here the bigger ſide. There are however, though not ſo many, yet there are Secondly, a ſort of Men who are Children of Light, whoſe Minds are more Illuminated, and their Eye more clear and ſingle, who look beyond the Veil of the Material World, the Beauty of which can neither charm, nor its Thickneſs detain their piercing Sight, and propoſe to themſelves the Beatitudes of another Life as their true and laſt End. This many do in *Profeſſion*, and ſome in *Reality*: In Profeſſion all Chriſtians do it, to whom therefore the Title of Children of Light is promiſcuouſly given by the Apoſtle, 1 *Theſ.* 5. 5. *Ye are all the Children of*

of Light, and the Children of the Day; We are not of the Night, nor of Darkneſs: That is as far as concerns Profeſſion and Solemn Undertaking. But that which all Chriſtians profeſs, ſome do really do, propoſing to themſelves *Habitually* at leaſt, the Happineſs of the *other* World as their laſt End, being by repeated Experiences, as well as rational Reflections upon the Nature of things, abundantly convinced of the vanity of *this*. And theſe indeed aim at the right Mark, though all of them have not a Hand ſteddy enough to hit it.

But to return again to the Children of this World, 'tis implied in the Third Place, that theſe do not act according to the Meaſures of true Wiſdom; for our Lord does not ſay abſolutely that they are Wiſe, but only that they are Wiſer in their Generation; which implies, that abſolutely ſpeaking, and upon the whole, they are not Wiſe. Indeed they think themſelves Wiſe, and the World for the moſt part is of their Opinion: They are generally eſteemed not only Wiſe, but the only Wiſe Men, Men of Reach and Deſign, Policy and Conduct; and he that does not play his Game, ſo as to thrive in the World, is generally pitied more for his *Folly*, than for his *Poverty*. Nay hence, and hence only, are taken the Meaſures of Wiſdom and Prudence, and this is made the

Rule and Standard of all Policy and Discretion; a Man is counted so far Wise, and no farther, than he knows how to get an Estate, to raise a Family, to give Birth to a Name, and make himself great and considerable in the World: He that can do this, is a Shrewd Man, and he that can't is either Pitied or Laught at (according to the Humor the World's in) by those that can.

Neither is it any Allay or Abatement of their Character, to say that all this is brought about by Sinister and Indirect Means, by Fraud and Cousenage, by Deceit and Corrupt Proceedings: This rather Commends the Parts and Ingenuity of the Man, shews him to be a Man of Art and Contrivance, and that he owes his Success more to good Management, than good Fortune; nay, he that can do thus, is the Topping Wise Man, and is thought worthy not only to *have*, but so far to *ingross* the Name, that a Shrewd Cunning Man (even in their own Language) is but another Word for a *Knave*. This is the general Sense of the World.

But whatever the Opinion of Men may be, we are assured by the Apostle who had Conversed in the other World as well as in this, that *the Wisdom of this World is Foolishness with God*; 1 Cor. 3. 19. and if so, to be sure 'tis Foolishness in it self, since the Intellect of God is the Measure of all Truth. And the Psalmist

Pſalmiſt ſpeaking of Worldly-Minded Men, that think their Houſes ſhall continue for ever, and call their Lands after their own Names, ſays expreſly, *Pſal.* 49. 13. *This is their Fooliſhneſs.* And this Cenſure he boldly charges upon them, how ſingular ſoever it might ſeem; and though not only the preſent Generation of Men ſhould vote them Wiſe, but even their Poſterity; thoſe of more Improved Reaſonings, and more Inlarged Experience, ſhould *praiſe their Saying.*

Thus light do theſe Men weigh in the Ballance of the *Sanctuary*; nor will they be found to be leſs wanting in that of *Reaſon*: For how can they deſerve the Title of Wiſe Men, who are out in the very firſt and leading part of Wiſdom, the Chuſing of a Right End? This is ſuch a mighty Flaw, as nothing that comes after can make up or Compenſate for. When once a Man has fixed himſelf a wrong End, he has cut out a *falſe Chanel* for the whole Courſe of his Life, which muſt needs be ever after one continued Miſtake, one conſtant Blunder; and though he be never ſo Ingenious afterward, to compaſs this End, his Wiſdom comes too late, and does but ſerve to inſure and haſten his Ruin. The Ship indeed has good Sails, there is nothing wanting in the *Executive* part; but ſteering to a wrong Point, it has this only advantage from

from them, to be dashed upon the Rock with the greater Speed and Violence.

The short is, no Man is, or ought to be accounted Wise for that wherein he is Mistaken; and that this is the case of those who propose to themselves false Ends is most certain: For no Man proposes any End but what he takes to be *Good*, and fit to be Prosecuted, Evil as Evil being not within the Possibilities of Choice, whether as to the *End* or as to the *Means*. If therefore the End prove really Evil (which is here supposed to be the Case,) 'tis otherwise than what he thought it, and consequently he was abused and imposed upon in his Choice. And now let him play his *After-game* never so well, and pursue this his false End by never so apt and compendious Methods, the most he can pretend to, is to drive well in a false Road, and the most he can justly expect is to be thought a *Cunning*, but he must never set up for a *Wise* Man. He may indeed pass for such an one among the *Many*, as an Ill Acted Part is commonly the most Applauded by the injudicious Rabble of the Theater. But this Wisdom is now Foolishness with *God*, the only exact and unerring Judge, and will one day be made appear so to *Angels* and *Men*. Then also shall the Children of this World, who have been so often admired and cryed up for their extraordinary Depth and Reach, and been

been reckon'd the Sharpeſt Intreaguers and Projectors, the very *Machiavels* of their Age, confeſs and lament their own great Folly and Weakneſs, (when yet 'tis too late to be Wiſe,) and admire the *Wiſdom* as well as the *ſtrange Salvation* of thoſe whoſe Life they once thought Madneſs.

And thus I have done with the Three things implied in the Text; I now proceed in the Fourth place to the thing directly Aſſerted: Which is, that notwithſtanding the want of true Wiſdom in the Children of this World, they are however wiſer in their Generation than the Children of Light. Or in other Words, that however they are befool'd in the Choice of their End, yet they make more prudent Proviſions for its Attainment and Security, and Proſecute it by more agreeable Means, and with more Cunning and Diligence, than they who have Choſen a Better, do theirs. They are indeed worſe *Propoſers*, but they are better *Executors*, worſe *Deſigners*, but better *Contrivers*. They come vaſtly ſhort indeed of the Children of Light in the firſt part of Wiſdom, the Choice of a right End, in which reſpect the Child of Light has as much the Precedency in point of Wiſdom, as Heaven is better than Earth; but then they exceed them as much in the Second, the Choice and Application of right Means.

Now

Now this I ſhall make appear Two ways; Firſt, Antecedently, by conſidering what Grounds of probability there are that it ſhould be ſo. Secondly, *à poſteriori*, by Comparing the proceedings of each of theſe Men, whereby it will appear that it is ſo.

And Firſt, there are Grounds of probability and Preſumption that it ſhould be ſo: For it may be conſidered in the Firſt place, that the Children of this World having choſen the Good of the Animal Life for their End, muſt be ſuppoſed to ſet the ſame value upon it, and to look upon it with the ſame Eye that the Children of Light do upon Glory and Happineſs; And this notwithſtanding all its real Vanity and Emptineſs: For did they ſee and perceive that, they would never have choſen it for their End; and if they do not, then 'tis all one to them, as if it were a Solid and Subſtantial Good, and they prize it accordingly. Thus far therefore they both ſtand upon equal Ground.

But then Secondly, 'Tis to be conſidered, that although theſe two Ends conſidered Abſolutely and Simply in themſelves, are alike valued by their reſpective Proponents, (for then is a thing at the *higheſt* value, when 'tis made an End,) yet one of the Scales may and will receive ſome moments of Advantage more than the other, from ſome Accidental and Collateral Circumſtances, which may

may more ſenſibly indear one of theſe Ends, and give it a more Commanding Influence over the Soul that propoſes it: Which indeed is the preſent caſe.

For 1*ſt*, The good things of this World are *Preſent*, thoſe of the other *Remote* and *Diſtant*: How far diſtant, we don't know, and are therefore apt to fancy the fartheſt remove; like Travellers, that think the Way always longeſt, where they are the greateſt Strangers. Now we know a preſent Good has a great Advantage above a far diſtant and late Reverſion. A Candle that is near, affects us more than the Sun a great way off, and by its Neighbourhood, out does the others Bigneſs. And as 'tis in diſtance of *Place*, ſo it is in diſtance of *Time*; a preſent Good though it be leſs, is more affecting and inviting, than one of a more Sizeable Dimenſion, if it be Future; and there is more Force and Vertue in one Single *Now*, than in many *Hereafters*. 'Tis not in the Moral as in Phyſical *Statics*; there indeed that Weight weighs heavieſt, which is furtheſt removed from the Centre of Motion; but here the nearer the Weight, the ſtronger is its Power: And there is this convincing Reaſon for it, the Good that is Preſent, opens its ſelf all at once to the Soul, and acts upon it with its full and intire Force; there is not ſo much as a Ray of its Light but what

ſtrikes

strikes us. But now that which is future, is seen by Parts and in Succession, and a great deal of it is not seen at all; like the Rays of a too distant Object which are too much dispersed before they come at us, and so most of them miss the Eye. This makes the least Present Interest, out-weigh a very considerable *Reversion*, since the former strikes upon us with the strong Influence and Warmth of the Neighbouring Sun, the latter with the Faint and Cold Glimmerings of a Twinkling Star. And accordingly the Holy Ghost takes notice of it, as an extraordinary thing in *Moses*, and that argued him to be a Person of great Presence and Discernment of Mind, that he could so rightly Calculate his Interest, as to prefer the Future Rewards of Heaven, before the Present Glories of *Egypt*.

Then 2*dly*, The Good Things of this World are not only Present and at Hand, but *Sure* and *Certain*; I mean as to us, for the other are no less so in themselves. *We are sure* (as *Job* says) *that there is a Vein for the Silver, and a Place for Gold where they fine it*, Job. 28. Our Senses inform us of this, and that's a Testimony we seldom reject. As for the place of Happiness, we have heard the Fame thereof indeed with our Ears, but have neither seen it our selves, nor discoursed with those that have; and although 'tis

assured

aſſured to us with as much Evidence as is conſiſtent with the Nature and Vertue of *Faith*, nay with almoſt as much as a thing Future is capable of; yet *Darkneſs* and *Fear* commonly go together, and Men are generally very jealous and diſtruſtful about things whereof they are Ignorant, or half Inform'd, as Imperfect Eyes are apt to ſtart. And though the Principles of *Faith* are in themſelves as Firm and Firmer than thoſe of *Science*, yet to us 'tis not ſo Evident; nor do we ever aſſent ſo ſtrongly to what we Believe (be the Teſtimony never ſo Authentick,) as we do to what we Know.

Then *3dly*, The Good Things of this World, as they are Preſent and Sure, ſo do they ſtrike upon the moſt *Tender* and *Impreſſible* part about us, our Senſes. They attempt us, as the Devil did *Adam*, in our Weaker part, through the *Eve* of our Natures. A Senſible Repreſentation is the ſtrongeſt of all Repreſentations; a Senſible Repreſentation even of the *Vanity* of the World, would work more with us, than the Diſcourſe of an Angel about it; and I queſtion not, but that *Alexander* the Great was more inwardly affected when he ſaw the Ruins of the Grave of *Cyrus*, when he ſaw ſo great Power reduced to ſuch Narrow Limits, ſuch Majeſty ſeated on ſuch a Throne; the *Monarch* of *Aſia* Hid, or rather Loſt in an Obſcure

ſcure Cave, a Stone for his Bed, Cobwebs for his Tapeſtry, and all his Pomp and Glory turned into Night and Darkneſs; I ſay, he was more convinced of the Vanity of Greatneſs by this lively Appeal to his Senſes, than he ever was or could be by all the grave Lectures of his Maſter *Ariſtotle*. And if the *Vanity* of the World when repreſented to the Senſes, has ſuch vigorous Effects upon them, what ſhall we think of the *Glory* of it when ſo Repreſented? How would that Affect and Subdue us!

And this the Devil very well knew and conſidered, when he was to Tempt the Son of God; his deſign was to decoy him into Covetouſneſs and Ambition, and in order to this, he might have entertained him with fine Diſcourſes about the Wealth and Glories of the Terreſtrial Globe, and have read him a *Geographical Lecture* upon the Kingdoms and Empires of it; but he knew his Advantage better than ſo, and choſe rather to draw a *Viſionary Landskip* before him, and preſent him with a Senſible Idea of all this, knowing by old Experience how much more apt the Senſes are to take Impreſſion, than any other Faculty of Man.

Now this is the great advantage that the Good Things of this World have, they are obvious to our Senſes, we *See* them, we *Hear* them, we *Smell* them, we *Taſt* them, we *Feel* and

and Handle them, and have the moſt intimate and indearing Converſation with them; *The things that are Temporal are Seen*, 2 Cor. 4. 18. ſays the Apoſtle: 'Tis their diſtinguiſhing Character. But the things that are Eternal are not ſeen, but only through a Glaſs darkly, ſo ſeen as not to be diſcerned, and in reference to the other World, as the ſame Apoſtle ſays, *We walk by Faith and not by Sight*, 2 Cor. 5. 7.

From theſe and other ſuch Collateral Advantages which the things of this World have above thoſe of the next, it may in the Firſt place be preſumed, that thoſe who have erred ſo far as to make this their End, are in all probability like to Love it more Intenſely, and value it more highly than the Children of Light do their Ends, which wants theſe Senſible Indearments and Recommendations. Well, and if ſo, then it further follows, that of neceſſity they muſt be more heartily concerned for its Attainment, and conſequently more Wary in the *Choice*, and more Diligent in the *Uſe* of ſuch Means as ſerve to that purpoſe. For the Love of the Means always receives its Meaſure from that of the End.

And thus we ſee what grounds of probability there are, that it ſhould be ſo. I come now in the Second Place, briefly to compare the Proceedings of each of theſe Men,

whereby it will appear, that *de facto* it is so.

And here First we find by Experience, that the Men of this World do *prefer* their Secular Interest above all other things whatsoever; and that not only in Notion and Theory, Habitually and in General, (for that's supposed in its being made their End,) but also in every instant of Action, in all Junctures and Circumstances. Though their *End* be False, yet *they* are not so, but keep true to it, and always prefer it, retaining in every point of Action the very same Sense and Judgment they had of it when they first made it their Choice. And to satisfie that they are in good earnest, they will adhere to it at any rate, they will forfeit any Good, and undergo any Evil to Secure this their grand Stake. For will they not Rise Early, and Late take Rest, Drudge and Toil, Plot and Contrive, Cheat and Defraud, Lye and Dissemble, be of any Religion, or of no Religion, and submit to all the Baseneſſes imaginable, to Get or Secure or Recover a Place of Honour or Profit? Will they not incur the Curses of the Widow and Orphan, the Contempt of Wise Men, the Hatred of Mankind, the Censures of Posterity, the Displeasure of God, and even Damnation it self for the sake of their beloved Mammon? They will; they will bustle through all this, and will gain their Point, though they lose

every

every thing besides: And herein they are consistent with themselves, they act agreeably to their Principles.

But now will the Children of Light do much for their End? Will these part with the World for Heaven, as the other will part with Heaven for the World? Will these do or suffer any thing for the Interest of their *Souls*, as the other will for that of their *Bodies*? Some few there are that will, and God add to their Number. But are there not many who Habitually and in General, have proposed to themselves Heaven for their End, and so far are supposed to give it the Preference above all; and yet when they come to be set upon by a Temptation, to have before them the Charms of Pleasure, or the Terrors of Pain, or to be pressed with either Hopes of Gain, or Fear of Loss; in short, when they come to have any other considerable Interest brought into Competition with that which they made their End, will they not then suffer a present Interruption of their former Judgment, and actually undervalue what they *Habitually* prefer? Will they not enter into a Cloud of Darkness and Obscurity, lose the present Light of their former Convictions, and so act as Foolishly as those that never had any better Principles, or truer Sentiments? Will they not prove False to their Cause and to themselves,

make a Foolish Exchange, let go the Substance, and catch at the Shadow? Will they not refuse to take up the Crown for fear of the Thorns that guard it, and chuse rather to lose Heaven than be Translated thither in a Fiery Chariot? Yes, 'tis to be feared that most of them will; and that of those many that have proposed Heaven as their End, there are but few that would have the Courage to be *Martyrs* for it.

Again Secondly, The Children of this World as they will spare no *Pains*, so will they lose no *Time* or *Opportunity* for the Securing a Temporal Interest. They greedily Seize upon the next Minute, take Opportunity by the *Forelock*, and make haste to be Rich, though by doing so, they know they shall not be Innocent. They carefully observe every Season, lay hold upon the First that comes, and will be sure to strike Sail with the very next Wind that will carry them to their Port. They know very well, that the present time is the only time they are Masters of, and that they may reckon upon as their own, and therefore *that* they will be sure to Improve, and not trust to the Uncertainties and Contingencies of Futurity. Let but a Question arise about their Title to their Estate, and they can't sleep till it be clear'd up and confirm'd. Let but a Place of Dignity or Profit fall, and with what

what Expedition do theſe Eagles repair to the Carcaſs! They take the Wings of the *Morning*, perhaps of the *Night* too, and fly as if running for a Prize, or chaſed by an Enemy.

But now, are the Children of Light ſuch Prizers of Time, and ſuch Improvers of Opportunity? 'Twere well if they were. For what is more common than to ſee Men, not only the profeſſedly wicked and profligate, but even thoſe who have ſet their Faces *Sionward*, and propoſe Heaven as their End, to procraſtinate and adjourn their Repentance from Day to Day, from Month to Month, from Year to Year, to delay their Preparations for Eternity, and to Sleep Soundly and Securely, in a *Doubtful*, and ſometimes in a *Damnable* and Irreconciled State; and all this, though they know how ſhort and uncertain their Lives are, that 'tis but a *Breath* and a *Vapor* that ſoon paſſes away, and we are gone. Though they know that there is but this one time of Probation, and that *there is no Work, nor Device, nor Knowledg, nor Wiſdom in the Grave*, Eccl. 9. 10. Though they know that *Now is the accepted time, that Now is the Day of Salvation*, 2 Cor. 6. 2.

Again Thirdly, the Children of this World, as they will loſe no Time, ſo neither will they let ſlip any other Advantage of advancing their Fortunes, and of providing

against a Wet Day. They twist their own Interest with the Interest of their Friends, seek out for *all* Helps, and make use of the *Best*, and take the advantage of every Rising Ground. They have also a quick Eye upon all Revolutions, suppose themselves in all possible Cases, and make early Preparations for every Accident. They sit like Wary and Watchful Spiders in the Heart of their Webs, and there with a quick and perceptive Sense, they feel out the least Disturbances that threaten the Security of their little Tenement. Nor do they smell out Danger more suddenly than they provide against it. Thus the unjust Steward; when he foresaw he should quit his *Office*, and in that his *Livelyhood*, and be turned loose to the wide World, he presently bethought him of a Plank to Swim upon, made an Interest with his Lords Debtors, by under-rating their Accounts, that so when his *Master* should Discard him, *they* in Requital of his Kindness, might Receive and Harbour him.

But now are the Children of Light so careful to make use of all Helps and Means that may further them in the Attainment of their Great End? Such as the Grace of God, Happiness of Temper and Complexion, Good Education, Well disposed Circumstances of Life, the Good Examples of others, Advice of Spiritual Persons, and the like. Besides,

are

are they also so Frugal and Provident, so Forecasting and Contriving for the future? Are they so careful in the day of Grace to lay up in Store against a Spiritual Famine, in the days of Peace to Store themselves with Spiritual Armour against the time of Persecution, in the time of Life and Health to provide against the Hour of Sickness and Death, and by a Wise Dispensation of the fading and unrighteous Mammon, to procure to themselves everlasting Habitations? Are they? Every ones Experience and Observation may assure him that they are not.

Once more, the Children of this World, as they Catch at all Advantages that may further their Grand Affair, so are they withal as careful to avoid all *Occasions* of Loss and Damage; they love to tread upon firm Ground, shun Hazards as well as actual Misfortunes, and won't so much as come within the *Smell* of Danger. How Shy is the Man of Interest, of lighting among such Company as he thinks will be apt to borrow Mony of him, draw him into Suretyship, or betray him into any Expences! Does he not fly from these as from the Snares of Death, or from the Face of a Serpent?

But do the Children of Light take the same Care to avoid all Appearances of Evil, all Spiritual Dangers, and all Occasions and Temptations of Sinning against God and their own Happiness? We Pray indeed, and

our Saviour has taught us to do so, that God would not lead us into Temptation? But don't we often lead our Selves into as Bad as the Worst of those we can Pray against? We venture oftentimes causelessly and rashly within reach of the Devil's Chain, and are not afraid to stir up and awake that Roaring Lion: We love to play with Danger, to handle Knives and Razors, to walk upon Slippery Ground, to stand upon Turrets and Battlements, and to hazard our Vertue and Innocence, by *Needless*, and sometimes *Doubtful* Trials, where if we should Overcome, the Victory would scarce attone for the Imprudence. So much do the Children of this World exceed the Children of Light in Wisdom.

Thus it is, and to our great shame we must Confess it: There is no Doubt or Dispute in the Victory, the Contention has been all along very unequal, and the Odds very apparent; we are utterly *Distanc'd* in the Race, and see the Prize of Wisdom born away before us. We have indeed in our Eye a much Nobler Mark, but we want a steddy Hand. Our End is better than theirs, but our Management is not so good. And what a shame is it for us that have proposed a Greater and a better End, and are also more Instructed in the Choice of Means, (which are pointed out and described to us by God himself,) to be yet so far out-witted by

by thoſe of Lower Aims, and who are fain to Study and Contrive their own Means, and whoſe Wiſdom after all, is Fooliſhneſs with God! And yet thus it is, the Devil's Scholars are better Proficients than Chriſt's Diſciples; the Ark falls before *Dagon*, and Light is outſhone by Darkneſs.

What therefore remains, but that ſince we will not Learn in *Chriſt*'s, we ſhould be ſent to the *Devil*'s School, and imitate the Politicks of the Dark Kingdom, and of the Children of this World? Imitate them I ſay, not in the Choice of the *End*, (which indeed is very Poor and low,) but in that *Wiſdom*, Diligence and Care wherewith they proſecute it, and be as Wiſe at leaſt unto *Salvation*, as they are to *Deſtruction*. *Go to the Ant, thou Sluggard*, ſays *Solomon*, *conſider her Ways, and be Wiſe*, Prov. 6. 6. And may I not in like manner beſpeak the greateſt part even of piouſly diſpoſed Chriſtians, Go to the Men of the World, and learn Wiſdom?

Let us then be as Wiſe as theſe Serpents; and ſince we have Choſen the *Better Part*, and are ſo nigh to the Kingdom of God, let us not for the want of *One* thing, miſs of being compleatly Wiſe and Happy. But as we have made a good Choice, let us proſecute it with equal Prudence. So will our Wiſdom be Whole and Intire, Uniform and Conſiſtent, Blameleſs and Irreprehenſible;

in a Word, that Wisdom which shall be *Justified of all her Children.*

A Discourse concerning Righteous and Unrighteous Judgment.

Joh. 7. 24. *Judge not according to the Appearance, but judge Righteous Judgment.*

THAT which the great *Descartes* makes necessary to a *Philosopher*, is indeed no less so to a *Christian*; to strip and devest himself of all Prejudices and Partialities, to unravel all his former Sentiments, to unthink all his Pre-conceived Opinions, and so reduce his Soul to the natural Simplicity of a *Blank Table*, and to the Indifferency of an even and well poised Ballance. For as it matters much in reference to our Actions, what our Sentiments and Judgments of things are (because we always act as at that present instant we think,) so does it to the Regularity and Uprightness of our Judgments what the Temper and Disposition of

our

our Mind is. The Wise *Ben-Sirach* has long since observed, that *Wisdom will not enter into a Polluted Spirit*; and St. *Paul*, that *the Animal Man perceives not the things of God.* 1 Cor. 2. 14. There are it seems some *Moral* as well as *Natural* Dispositions of the Man that make the Soul unfit for Knowledge, and till these Scales fall off from her Eyes, she cannot see. But the *Pythagoreans* went higher, and taught their Disciples, χωρισμὸν ἀπὸ τοῦ σώματος πρὸς τὸ καλῶς φιλοσοφεῖν, that they must separate and unwind themselves even from their very Bodies, if they would be good Philosophers. This in a Qualified and Corrected Sence is true, for the Body is the great Impediment and Disadvantage of the Soul, and therefore all Bodily Passions and Inclinations, as well as Intellectual Habits and Appetites must be put to *Silence*, in the still and Attentive Search and Inquiry after Truth. But to the present purpose, it will be enough to remark, that Prejudices and Prepossessions as well as vitious Habits, a cross Constitution, and a gross Texture of Blood and Spirits, do Cloud and Pervert the Understanding, and take away the *Key* of *Knowledg*. This is that *Veil* which (as the Apostle complains,) 2 Cor. 3. 4. remain'd untaken away upon the *Jews*, in the Reading of the Old Testament. And which hindered them from understanding it,

and

and made them ſtand out in defiance againſt all the Divine Precepts and Convincing Works of the Son of God, whoſe Divinity through this Veil of Prejudice they could not diſcern. It was a greater hindrance to them in diſtinguiſhing the Character of his Perſon, than the Veil of his own Fleſh was, or the Myſtery of the *Incarnation*. This therefore muſt be removed by the Chriſtian as well as by the Philoſopher, and the Soul muſt be Purged before it can be enlightened, Freed from Prejudices and falſe Appearances before it can be from Errors and Miſapprehenſions. Without this Purity of *Heart*, there will be ſo little Clearneſs of *Head*, that let our Parts ſtand upon never ſo great Advantages, either of Art or of Nature, we ſhall neither be right in our Determinations of things, nor juſt in our Cenſure of Perſons; neither Wiſe in our Diſcourſes, nor Righteous in our Sentences; we ſhall neither maintain *Truth* nor *Charity*. All which is briefly Intimated and ſummarily Contained in this Admonition of our Saviour to the prejudiced and partially affected *Jews*, *Judge not according to the Appearance, but judge Righteous Judgment*.

In Diſcourſing upon which Words, I ſhall Firſt of all Inquire, what it is in general to judge according to Appearance?

Secondly, Whether all judging according to Appearance, be oppoſed to judging Righteous

teous Judgment, and conſequently here forbidden?

Thirdly, If all be not, which it is that is ſo?

Laſtly, I ſhall ſhew the great Reaſonableneſs and Neceſſity of the Precept, and Conclude.

I begin with the firſt Inquiry, what it is in general to Judge according to *Appearance*. Now this will be beſt known by conſidering the import of the Terms ſeverally. By *Judging* therefore, is properly underſtood that action of the Mind which either joins the Attribute with the Subject, or ſeparates it from it. Or to ſpeak leſs Artificially, and more to Common Apprehenſion, which either affirms or denies one thing of another. By *Appearance*, I underſtand the Repreſentation of the Object to the Mind, with its Motives and Arguments, true or falſe, in order either to aſſent or diſſent. So that to Judge according to Appearance, is in other Words to affirm or deny one thing of another, upon the repreſentation of certain Arguments or Motives, to *Believe*, *Think*, or to be *Aſſured* that a thing is ſo or ſo, upon ſuch and ſuch Grounds; and ſo it takes in the Three-fold kind of Aſſent, and that in all the variety of Degree, *Faith*, *Opinion*, and *Science*, with this only difference between them, that whereas Faith and Opinion do not

not necessarily suppose a Firm Foundation, but are indifferent to due and undue Appearances, (for a Man may believe and think upon false as well as upon good Grounds.) Science does always suppose a due and regular Appearance of the Object, and cannot proceed but upon sufficient Grounds.

And this I think sufficient in Answer to the First Question; I proceed therefore to inquire Secondly, whether all Judging according to Appearance, be opposed to judging Righteous Judgment, and consequently here forbidden. But we need not inquire long about it, for 'tis most certain that all is not; for if it were, there could than be no such thing as that *Righteous Judgment* which our Saviour *Commands*, and therefore *Supposes*. Nay, there could be no such thing as Judging at all, because all manner of Judgment is grounded upon the Appearance of things, and without some motive of Perswasion, some shew of Truth, no Man can in any degree be Perswaded. For the Understanding can no more be determined without an Appearance of *Truth*, than the Will can without an Appearance of *Good*: And consequently 'tis as absurd, that all *Judging* according to Appearance should be Criminal, as that all *Willing* according to Appearance should be so. For then indeed all manner of Judgment would be Unrighteous, and

a Man could not use his Intellectual Faculty, but he must sin; which would introduce a new and unheard of *Scepticism* into the World, and oblige Men to suspend the Exercise of their Intellectual Powers, not because there is no Truth, but because 'tis not lawful to Embrace her.

Since therefore, all Judging according to Appearance, is not opposed to Righteous Judgment, nor consequently here Forbidden, it concerns us to inquire in the Third place, which it is that is so.

And First to Judge ill of a Man upon clear and full Evidence, is not that Judging according to Appearance, which is here Forbidden, as opposed to Righteous Judgment: Nay this is the most Righteous Judgment that can be, for this is the due use of our Judging Faculty, in the right Exercise whereof, 'tis impossible there should be any Miscarriage. I do not make a meer Judging Rightly, or according to what is *True*, to be a due use of our Understandings; for though a Man give his Judgment according to Truth, yet if he be determined to such an Assent by incompetent Motives, he does not use his Understanding aright; but if it be in a Matter of bare Speculation, is guilty of *Levity* and *Rashness*; if in a thing wherein his Brothers Reputation is concerned, of *Uncharity* and *Censoriousness*. But if my Judgment of another

ther be never so Ill, provided the Evidence be Full and Clear, I make a right use of my Judging Faculty, nor can my Judgment be taxed as Unrighteous. And upon this Principle relies all the Innocence and Equity of Courts of Justice, the severest of whose *Verdicts* are Justified by the Sufficiency of the *Evidence.*

And there is the same common Reason and Measure for the more private Court of *Conscience*, that there is for the more publick ones, and that which warrants the Proceedings of either, will justifie both; so that if it be lawful for a Jury to bring in a Verdict of the highest Guilt against a Man upon clear Evidence, any Private Person may also upon the like Grounds pass the like Ill Judgment concerning any Man within his own Breast, and in his Thoughts pronounce him a Criminal, if he has good Evidence for such a Judgment. Thus if I see a Man live in a constant course of Vice, in open Defiance to all Laws both Human and Divine, to Wallow in all manner of Bestiality, and drink down Iniquity with Greedines, I may safely and innocently pronounce him an Ill Man. First, because 'tis not in a Man's Power to suspend such a Judgment, any more than 'tis to resist a Demonstration in *Mathematicks.* The Truth thrusts her self upon me, and I cannot put her back, she will be imbraced

imbraced and I cannot refuſe her; I may wink againſt the *Sun*, but I cannot ſhut my Eyes againſt *Manifeſt Truth*: And to pretend *Charity* here, is ridiculous; for however Charity may oblige me to Believe and Hope the Beſt, where there is any room for a favourable Conſtruction, yet certainly it does not oblige me to put out my Eyes, and reject all the information of my Senſes: Neither is it poſſible for me to do ſo. But ſuppoſe I *could* reſiſt ſuch a Judgment, yet I *need* not, becauſe Secondly, in ſuch a Caſe, there is no wrong done to the Party whom my Cenſure concerns: He is repreſented in a faithful Glaſs, cenſured after his due Character, and called by his proper Name, and therefore cannot complain of an Injury, without committing one. *Acts* 13. 10. *O full of all Subtilty and all Miſchief, thou Child of the Devil, thou Enemy of all Righteouſneſs*, ſaid St. *Paul* to *Elymas* the Sorcerer, when he ſaw him endeavouring to turn away the Deputy from the Chriſtian Faith. And *have not I choſen Twelve, and one of you is a Devil*, ſaid our Bleſſed Saviour. Both theſe Charges went very high, but the Evidence of the Guilt bore Proportion to them, and that was their Juſtification. 'Tis therefore very Warrantable to paſs a ſevere Judgment upon a Man, when 'tis plain and out of all queſtion that he deſerves it. Nay 'tis not only Warrantable,

but in several respects of great use and Necessity; for by this Means I am instructed to inlarge my Litany, both for his Conversion, and for my own Deliverance, to apply Reproofs and Advices with all other Methods of Reformation, to beware of his Contagion my self, and in great Measure to prevent its diffusion among others. Whereas if we suffer our Eyes to be so far blinded by a pretended Charity, as not to see the Devil under his Monastick Disguise, he has what he could wish, and what Ill Men use to wish;

Noctem Peccatis, & Fraudibus objice Nubem.

to be Skreen'd about with the Shades of Night, and to Sin in a Cloud, and will do the more Mischief for not being better Understood, and destroy like *the Pestilence that walketh in Darkness*, Psal. 91. 6.

But Secondly, to judge Ill of a Man upon such a Concurrence of shrewd Circumstances as makes up what we call a *Moral Demonstration*, is not that judging according to Appearance, which is here Condemned. This is also so frequently rely'd upon in Courts of Justice, where Sentence of Death is often given upon such Evidence; nay the greatest part of Human Affairs is known to turn upon this Hinge, and indeed not without good Reason. For although this be an inferior degree of Evidence, and such as leaves an Absolute

ſolute Poſſibility that the thing may be otherwiſe, yet it ſecures a Man from all *Fear* of the Contrary; and a Traveller may as little doubt of his way when lightned by the numerous Union of little Splendors in the Milky Way, as when he has the Broad Eye of Heaven for his Guide. For though every ſingle Circumſtance in this great heap of Inducements, has but the force of a Probability, and conſequently all together can produce no more than that by a proper and direct efficacy; yet there is a new and ſecondary Force that ariſes from Reflection; and the *Confederate* Probabilities, weigh more in their Conjunction, than not only ſome, but even all of them would do *Singly*. Indeed they fall little ſhort of a ſtrict Demonſtration, it being hardly conceivable how there ſhould be ſuch a conflux of Arguments upon one ſide of the Contradiction if the Truth were not there too.

And moreover there is one Advantage that a Moral Demonſtration has above a Phyſical one, namely, that there can be no contrary Demonſtration brought againſt it. 'Tis otherwiſe in the latter; as for inſtance, in that endleſs and unbounded Controverſy concerning the Compoſition of a *Continuum* and the infinite Diviſibility of Quantity, where there are plain Demonſtrations (that is, ſuch as by Men of Art and Subtilty can-

not be diſcern'd from ſuch,) on both ſides, which yet are Contradictory. But now, this a Moral Demonſtration does not admit of, ſince it cannot lay claim to that Name, till after the Probabilities of both ſides have been Compared, and one Scale mightily outweighs the other. Whenever therefore there is this Evidence for any Mans Wickedneſs, I may ſafely cenſure him as Guilty. *Thus, that the *See* of *Rome* is the Seat of Antichriſt, though this be not evident up to the degree of Phyſical Demonſtration, yet when I conſider what the Notes and Marks of Antichriſt are, how various in their Number, how conſiderable in their Quality, and how exactly they all agree to a certain Order of Men in the World, and to none beſides, together with all the variety of Concurrence in point of *Synchroniſms* and the like; I ſuppoſe I might without any danger of Cenſoriouſneſs or Uncharity, write *Myſtery* upon the Triple Crown, and conclude him that wears it to be *the Man of Sin.* This would not be that Judging according to Appearance, which is oppoſed to Righteous Judgment.

See a ſhort, but very convincing Account of this matter in Dr. Burnet's *Latin Theory; the Second Part,* Pag. 126.

As it is not, in the Third place, to ſuſpect Ill of a Perſon upon conſiderable ſigns and circumſtances, that is, upon ſuch as would

would determin my Opinion in any other Matter wholly indifferent, and where I have no Intereſt, Paſſion, or Prejudice concern'd, to have it thus or otherwiſe. To pronounce Abſolutely and Peremptorily in ſuch a caſe, would indeed be a degree of Cenſoriouſneſs beyond the allowance of either Charity or Prudence, becauſe the Concluſion would then exceed the force of the Premiſes, which is ill in *Logick*, and worſe in *Morality*; but a bare Suſpicion is very Warrantable upon ſuch grounds, and conſiſtent with the higheſt Charity and Prudence of a Chriſtian; for *Suſpicion* is not Evil as Suſpicion, being as ſuch only a certain degree of Aſſent, which cannot be evil in its own Nature, but is either ſo or otherwiſe, according as the grounds are upon which it proceeds. Indeed to be *Suſpicious*, we commonly take in an ill Senſe, and reckon it among the Characters of an ill Man, not that we think *Suſpecting* to be in it ſelf unlawful, but becauſe we ſuppoſe the Man whom we call Suſpicious, more apt and forward to entertain ill Suſpicions, than in the reaſon of the thing he ought to be. But if the grounds of my Suſpicion be juſt and reaſonable, ſuch as conſidering Men uſe to be determined by in other matters of acknowledged Indifferency, it well then be as lawful for me to Suſpect as to Judge more

absolutely upon grounds that are more clear and evident.

There are (I observe) a certain sort of Men in the World who are not only careless and regardless of their Behaviour, not using that Caution and Circumspection which they ought and easily might for the prevention of ill Suspicions, but studiously order the course of their Conversation so, as if they were fond of Jealousies, and laid a Trap for Censure, and designed to *decoy* Men into an ill opinion of them; and then (which is the most surprizing thing of all,) as soon as they have caught their Prey, and are thought and spoken amiss of, they cry out, the World is censorious, and where's your Charity? But in the First place, are not these Men even with the World? Don't they Censure as much as they themselves are Censured? But to let that pass, how do they make good their Charge? Why, they say they are Innocent, they are not the Men the World has taken and represented them for. It may be so, but sure my Charity does not stand or fall with the Truth of your Guilt, the Question as to that being not whether you are really the Man I took you to be, but whether you have not given me just and reasonable grounds to think so. And if you have, 'tis not your *Innocence* that will condemn me of unjust *Censure*, any more than it will acquit you from the Crime of *Scandal*. If

If therefore theſe great Pretenders to Charity and Candor, would have the ill-natured World leave off Cenſuring according to ſuch Appearances, let them be more careful to abſtain from all *Appearances* of *Evil*; for as long as Men put on Bears Skins, the Dogs will Bark; and to be angry with them if they do, is as abſurd, as to give them the Occaſion. For what if you walk not in the *Counſel* of the *Ungodly?* yet if you *ſtand in the way of Sinners*, and *ſit in the Seat of the Scornful*, if you have all the Symptoms and Appearances of an ill Man, I have good grounds to ſuſpect you as ſuch, and a well-grounded Suſpicion is always according to Charity. Thus if a Man who for many Years paſt, has been vehemently ſuſpected to be of a different Religion from that which he openly Profeſſes, ſhould at length when the warm influence of a like-perſwaded Princes Favour, invites him to come abroad and diſmantle his Secrecies, and at ſuch a period of this Life too, when 'tis to be preſumed that the vibration of his Judgment has been long ſince over, and ſetled in the point of its gravity, and that he had no new Changes to make; if I ſay, he ſhould then appear to be what the World took him for long before, I hope 'tis a pardonable Cenſure, if I think he has been a Diſſembling Hypocrite all along, and that he would have continued ſo to the laſt, if

Opportunity and Countenance had not put an end to his Diſſimulation.

To think ill of a Man upon ſuch grounds and appearances as theſe, is to think *rationally*, and how can he tranſgreſs, that duly follows the conduct of his Reaſon? The Wiſe Son of *Sirach* allows greater Liberty, when he tells us, that a *Man's Attire, Exceſs of Laughter and Gait, ſhew what he is*; that is, afford us juſt Meaſure whereby to judge of him, to judge him to be none of the Wiſeſt. And our Saviour reproves the *Jews* for not diſcerning the face of the Times, *Luke* 12. 56. And if a Man may judge of the Times, then why not of thoſe that live in them, and upon whoſe account alone it is that one Time is diſtinguiſhed from another in relation to good or evil? In all this therefore we ſin not, nor charge our Neighbours fooliſhly. But this we do.

Firſt, Whenever we take up an ill Opinion of a Man raſhly and ſuddenly, and at firſt daſh prick him down for a Knave, without ſo much as giving our ſelves the trouble of inquiring into the merits of the cauſe; there are too many that do ſo, that let their Thoughts and Tongues too run before their Wit; that throw out their Cenſures at random, and ſpeak Evil *extempore*, without conſidering of *whom* they talk, or *what*, or *why*: Men that are for running down every one

that

that comes in their way, and are for paſſing Sentence immediately without any trial or examination, nay without ſo much as the formality of asking, *Guilty or not Guilty*? This is certainly a very prepoſterous headlong method againſt all ſenſe and good breeding as well as Charity. 'Tis like the *Jews* that were all for crucifying the Lord of Life before they had heard him. But this is ſuch a groſs piece of Injuſtice as ſufficiently condemns it ſelf; all therefore that I ſhall further ſay to the Men of this Practice is, that he who makes haſt to *Cenſure*, can no more be innocent, than he that makes haſt to be *Rich*; and that if we ought to conſider before we venture to *Commend*, (as Wiſe Men ſay we ought) then much more ought we before we *Condemn*.

Secondly, When though we do conſider, and make ſome enquiry into the cauſe, and withal find ſome ground and foundation for an ill Judgment, yet we conclude beyond the force of the Premiſes, and give a Peremptory Sentence, where there are grounds for no higher an Aſſent, than Opinion or Suſpicion. This is a certain ſign that we are not determined by the Moments of Truth, by the ſtrength of Reaſon and Argument, but by ſome other By-Conſideration and partial Inducement. For were our Judgments guided and determined by the ſole Appearances

of

of Truth, 'tis impossible that our Assent should be stronger than the Evidence that causes it. For the Understanding of it self, can be determined no farther than as the Object appears to be either true or false; if it be, all that over plus of Judgment that exceeds the degrees of Evidence, must be produced by some other cause, the Evidence alone could cause no more than what was proportionable to it. There is indeed a mixture in all such Judgments, and the *Will* has a part in them as well as the *Understanding*. He therefore that concludes worse of another than in Appearance he has reason to do, must be supposed in some measure *willing* to do so, that is, in other Words, to be under some Malice or Prejudice against him; and he that judges upon such Principles, can never judge Righteous Judgment.

Thirdly, This we do when we conceive an ill Apprehension of a Person from one or two single instances of his Life, without considering the general tenour of his Conversation. This is a very unjust way of proceeding, and contrary to all Human and Divine Measures. The main current of a Man's Life is to be regarded, and if this maintain a regular Course, 'tis not here and there a little straggling Rivulet that should spoil the Character. For if the Denomination ought always to be taken from the major part, certainly

tainly much more ſo when it lies on the moſt favourable ſide. To ballance therefore one ſingle *wandring Star* againſt a whole *Conſtellation* of regular actions, is a very ill ſort of unrighteous Judgment, and ſuch as the beſt of Men could never be able to abide, who muſt needs all be caſt in ſuch a Court as this. Such a way of Judging therefore, is not to be indured, eſpecially conſidering that the Supream Judg of all does not judg us at this rate, but often proceeds by a contrary meaſure, and ſuffers one ſingle Vertue to cover a multitude of Sins.

Fourthly, and Laſtly, To give one general Meaſure for all; this we do whenever our ill Opinion of a Man is built upon ſuch poor and ſlight Appearances, and would not be ſufficient to gain our Aſſent in any other indifferent matter, wherein we are altogether diſ-intereſſed which way the Scale turns, or prevail with us to think the ſame concerning another Perſon. This is a ſure Sign that Prejudice holds the Ballance, ('tis held ſo uneven,) and that we judge what we would willingly *have*. And this is more particularly that judging according to appearance, which our Lord here condemns. For thus ſtood the caſe, our Saviour had perform'd a Cure upon the Sabbath day, among thoſe who were Superſtitious Obſervers of it; now this carried ſome Appearance of its Violati-

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on: Whereupon the *Jews* tax him with Prophaning that holy *Reſt*, not at all reflecting either upon *Moſes*'s ſeeming inconſiſtency, in appointing ſuch a troubleſome work as *Circumciſion* to be done on that day, as often as it happened to be the *Eighth*, or upon *themſelves* for then adminiſtring it. But the reaſon was plain, they were ſoundly prejudiced againſt *Chriſt*, but not againſt *Moſes* or *themſelves*. Well therefore might our Lord ſay, *if a Man on the Sabbath day receive Circumciſion, that the Law of Moſes ſhould not be broken, are ye angry at me becauſe I have made a Man every whit whole on the Sabbath day?* Will you *wound* upon that day, and ſhall not I *heal?* Judge not according to Appearance, (Κατ' Ὄψιν, according to every ſlight ſuperficial Appearance, ſuch as you your ſelves would not ſubmit to in another caſe,) but judge Righteous Judgment. The great Reaſonableneſs and Neceſſity of which Precept comes now in the laſt place to be conſidered.

Its Equity relies mainly upon this double ground, the ill Principle that ſuch ſuperficial judging proceeds from, and the ill Conſequences it leads to.

Firſt, It proceeds from an ill Principle; it argues Firſt, that we are conſcious of ſome inward Baſeneſs in our ſelves, ſomething that is very low and ſordid, which makes us ſo prone and eaſy to ſuſpect the ſame in others;

thers; as he that is Drunk himſelf, fancies every one elſe to be ſo that he meets. It argues Secondly, that we thirſt after Eminency, and yet deſpair of attaining it any other way, then by levelling thoſe about us; which makes us ſo ready and willing to diſcover Spots in the Moon, and Flaws in the moſt Solid and *Maſſy* Vertue. It argues Thirdly, a Mind very diſaffected to our Neighbour, to Human Nature indeed, and as much alienated from true Spirit of Love and Goodneſs. That we are full of Envy, Pride, Malice and Prejudice; that we love to dwell upon Sores and Deformities, that we take a ſecret pleaſure in the Follies and Infirmities of Mankind, and grieve at that whereat the Angels rejoyce, namely, the wiſe Behaviour, and good order of Men, all which is Inhuman and Diabolical, fit only for Devils and Evil Spirits, but altogether contrary to the *unſelfiſh univerſalized* nature of God, who rejoyced when he ſaw all things good and perfect; and to *Charity*, whoſe Character St. *Paul* tells us, is, that *It rejoyces not in Iniquity*, 1 Cor. 13. 6.

But Secondly, the *Conſequences* of this ſort of Judging are as bad as the Principle; for 1*ſt*, He that proceeds to Judgment upon every little Appearance, muſt needs be often miſtaken, and give Sentence with an *Erring Key*, and ſo often incur that Woe pronounced

ced by the Prophet againſt all ſuch as call Evil Good, and Good Evil; *Iſa.* 5. 20. becauſe Falſhood often wears the guiſe of Truth, and things ſeem otherwiſe than they are. Thus the Affability and free Converſation of our Saviour, which was really the effect of his great Humility and condeſcending Goodneſs, and of his earneſt deſire to benefit Mankind, was hardly Cenſured by the Maligning *Jews*, and miſconſtrued as a piece of Levity and Diſſoluteneſs; *Behold ſay they, a Man Gluttonous, and a Wine bibber, a Friend of Publicans and Sinners*: Mat. 11. 19. By this means we ſhall miſ-rate both Perſons and Things, and often deny thoſe our good word, who it may be, if better known, deſerve even our Reverence and Admiration. By this means private Grudges will be entertain'd, and open Quarrels will be broach'd. Mens Affections will be groundleſly and unaccountably eſtranged from one another, the Bands of Friendſhip will be untyed, and Men will be jealous and afraid of their deareſt well-wiſhers; good Conſtitutions will ſuffer for Perſonal Miſcarriages, good Churches for unworthy Members, good Religions for ill Profeſſors, good Counſels and good Cauſes for their ill Succeſs; and laſtly, that good Reputation which all Men exceedingly value, and which ſome Men have a fair Right to, and which the Wiſeſt of Men prefers before

fore great Riches, *Prov.*22.4. will be wounded by the Roving Shot of every Goſſiping Tongue.

To which I may add in the laſt place, that when Men have once accuſtomed themſelves to hard Cenſures, upon ſmall Appearances, they will be apt to enlarge their Court of Judicature, and from Cenſuring the Actions of *Men*, proceed to Queſtion and Condemn the Diſpenſations of *Providence*, and ſay with the Impious Houſe of *Iſrael*, *the way of the Lord is not equal.*

It concerns us all therefore to uſe that Faculty with great Diſcretion, upon the right or wrong uſe of which ſo much depends; to judge with Caution, and Circumſpection, and Mercy here, leſt we find Judgment without Mercy hereafter.

A Discourse concerning Religious Singularity.

Rom. 12. 2. *Be not Conformed to this World.*

ONE of the greatest Supporters of Absurdity in Speculation, and of Immorality in Practice, is *Authority*; that of *Doctrin* in the former, and that of *Example* in the latter. It misguides and perverts the whole Man, puts a false Bias upon the whole motion of the Soul, imposes both upon our Understandings and upon our Wills, corrupts both our Sentiments and our Practices, and leads us out of the way both of *Truth* and *Vertue*. But it has a greater and more prevailing influence upon our Actions than upon our Sentiments, and our Lives suffer more by it than our Opinions. For besides, that there are more Examples of ill Living than of ill Thinking, and a well-moralized Conversation, is a greater Rarity, than an Orthodox Head, there being not such Temptations and Occasions to *Error* as there are to *Vice*; there is also this further difference,

difference, that in our *Opinions* we more uſually follow thoſe Authorities which ſtand off at a great diſtance from us, and which Antiquity by I know not what Artifice, recommends to us as Sacred and Venerable. But in our *Actions* we take a quite contrary meaſure, and are rather apt to conform our ſelves to the Genius and Mode of the Age we live in, which being preſent, ſhines upon us with a direct and perpendicular Ray, and more ſtrongly influences and provokes our Imitation and Compliance.

And truly this is the greateſt Miſchief that is derived upon the Minds of Men from Authority, and the chiefeſt Head of Complaint that lies againſt it; were it only a Stop to the Advancement of Learning, or a Miſleader of our Underſtandings in Speculative Inquiries; were it only a Bar to Notional Improvements, or a Betrayer of our Orthodoxy, it might be thought to have done Penance enough under the Chaſtiſement of a Satyr or Declamation. For the greateſt ſtock of Knowledg which upon the beſt advantages we can attain to, is ſo inconſiderable, that 'tis hardly worth while to be very angry and fall out with what ſtands in our way, and hinders our little Progreſs. There is no great Miſchief done; 'tis like ſpoiling what was ſpoil'd before, and which otherwiſe would come to little. But ſince 'tis the great

Enemy to all Righteousness, as well as to all Truth, since it debauches our Morals as well as our Understandings, and spoils the *Christian* as well as the *Philosopher*, 'tis fit it should be arraigned before an higher Court, and be Condemned by the Censure of an *Apostle*. And so it is, and that upon great and weighty Reasons, in the Words of the Text, *Be not Conform'd to this World.*

In the Words, we may consider a *Supposition* and a *Caution*. The Supposition is twofold.

First, That the general course of the World is very bad, and that Vice has by much the Majority of its side.

Secondly, That we are naturally apt to imitate that which is most prevailing, and to conform to the course and way of the World.

Lastly, the *Caution* is against this Inclination, that we should not be Conformed to the modes and usages of this World; which I shall first *state* as to its Measure and Limits, and then *Justifie* as to its Equity and Reasonableness; and so conclude with some Practical Remarks upon the whole.

And in the First place, 'tis here supposed, that the general course of the World is very bad, and that Vice has by much the Majority of its side. This, though at first sight it looks like a *Common Place*, a matter of frequent, obvious and familiar Consideration, is

is yet a thing that is not often thoroughly conſidered, and there are but few that have a true, lively, and affectionate Senſe of it. 'Tis not eaſy for thoſe that are good themſelves, to imagin how bad others are, and how much Wickedneſs there is in the World; and as for evil Men, they don't uſe to trouble their Heads with ſuch ſerious Reflections: So that neither of them are like to have a juſt ſenſe and reſentment of this matter.

The World we commonly compare to a *Theatre*; and truly for the number of Actors, and the variety of Action, 'tis the moſt Pompous and Magnificent of any; but the Parts that are acted upon it, are for the moſt, very Tragical, and its Scenes full of Horrour and Confuſion. For not to mention unjuſt and cauſleſs Wars, Maſſacres, Rebellions and Murthers, which like *Earth-quakes* make the frame of Nature to tremble, and threaten the fall of the Stage upon which they are Acted; who can reckon up the open Oppreſſions, and the ſecret Frauds, the Violences and the Deceits, the Extortions and the Over-reachings, with all the Arts of Falſhood and Subtilty which are every where and every day made uſe of among Men, to diſpoſſeſs one another of their Rights and Fortunes? And who is there that can imagine what private Inſinuations, what ſly Contrivances, what ſpiteful Whiſperings,

what treacherous Arts there are daily uſed even among thoſe that profeſs Dearneſs and Kindneſs to one another, to undermine one anothers Intereſt, and blaſt one anothers Honours and Reputations? I need not go to the Courts of Princes for this, thoſe Schools and Nurſeries of Immortality, for there is ſcarce any Society of Men free from it. To this, if I ſhould add the unnatural Feuds of Relations, the ungrateful Returns of obliged Perſons, the Treacheries of the Marriage-Bed, the Falſneſſes of Friends, the ill office of Neighbours, and the intolerable Practices of Revenge, not only upon pretences of Honour among the *Duelliſts*, but as they are generally carried on by the power and Intereſt of great Men, by the corrupt and vexatious methods of the Law, and by the common malice of the World; if I ſay I ſhould add this and a thouſand times more that might be ſaid, what a Picture ſhould I draw of Mankind, and what intelligent Spirit is there that would not be afraid, (if ſuch an account ſhould be given him before-hand,) to be *born* into, or to *live* in ſuch a World as this?

But thus it was immediately upon the beginning of things, thus it has been in all Ages, and thus it will be till the Arch-Angel's Trumpet ſhall at once awaken us from the ſleep of Death, and from the ſleep of Sin, and

and Time it ſelf ſhall be no more. For no ſooner had God finiſhed his Creation, and declared all things good in it, and began to take a Complacency in the works of his Hands, but *through Envy of the Devil, Sin came into the World*, and untuned the proportions of its new ſet Harmony; and being once planted in the Earth, it liked the Soil, and increaſed and multiplied by the care and induſtry of the Devil, as faſt as Mankind could by the *Benediction* of God. Inſomuch that God who not long before was repreſented by *Moſes* as Creating Man upon the moſt conſiderate Pauſe of Counſel and Deliberation, is now brought in, repenting that ever he had made him, *Gen. 6. 6.* And accordingly, he firſt ſhortens his Days, and that expedient failing, he proceeds to a ſeverer Judgment, and iſſues forth a Sentence to deſtroy him from the face of the Earth, *Ver.* 5. For *God ſaw that the Wickedneſs of Man was great, and that every Imagination of the Thoughts of his Heart was evil continually.* And again the Text ſays, that *God look'd upon the Earth, and behold it was Corrupt, for all Fleſh had Corrupted his way upon the Earth*, Ver. 12.

And truly 'tis incredible almoſt to think to what a pitch of Villany and Wickedneſs the World was then arrived in ſo ſhort a time; the World then like ſome of our Modern

Sinners, was young in Years and old in Debauchery; it look't as if the Devil being newly thrown out of Heaven, were in the very height of his Malice and Reſentment, and to retrieve again the loſt Field, endeavoured to increaſe his Numbers, to double his Ranks by making Men as very Devils as himſelf. For Vice ſeem'd to reign Abſolute and Uncontroull'd, and to have taken full Poſſeſſion of the whole Earth, ſo that excepting only Four Perſons, *Abel*, *Seth*, *Enos*, and *Enoch*, we read not of one good Man from *Adam* to *Noah*; ſo extreamly wicked and debauched was the World at that time, and ſo highly deſerving of that Emphatical Character which the Apoſtle St. *Peter* gives of it, calling it Κοσμὸς ἀσεβῶν, *the World of the Ungodly:* 2 Pet. 2. 5. As if it were a ſtate directly oppoſite to that of the bleſſed *Millennium*, to that new Heaven and new Earth, wherein as the ſame Apoſtle tells us, *dwelleth Righteouſneſs.*

But this you'll ſay, was at a time when God had not given any expreſs Directory for the Manners of Men, who were then left to the ſole guidance of their natural light, which at beſt is but a doubtful Twilight, and is withal apt to be clouded and corrupted by ill Cuſtoms and Practices, and in a little time to be quite extinguiſhed with the *Damps* of Vice and Debauchery.

Let us ſee therefore how it fared with the courſe

courſe of the World after the giving of the *Law*, when God had trim'd the dim Lamp of natural Conſcience, when Revelation had illuſtrated the obſcure Text of Reaſon, and the Moral, like the Natural World, was governed by a greater as well as by a leſſer Light. Now ſure one would expect that Men ſhould walk as *Children* of the *Day*, and that works of Darkneſs ſhould diſappear like Miſts before the Riſing Sun. And queſtionleſs, it muſt be acknowledged that the State of the Moral World was conſiderably better'd by this new acceſſion of Light, and that there was leſs Vice and more goodneſs among thoſe who enjoy'd it; the Peculiar People of God, than among the rude Heathen, who had no knowledg of his Laws. For to what purpoſe ſhould God viſit them with this his Day-ſpring from on high, and give Light to them that ſate in Darkneſs and in the Shadow of Death, but only that he might the better guide their Feet into the way of Peace?

In compariſon therefore of the Heathen World, this was a good ſtate of things; but yet Vice had ſtill the upper hand, and conſidering the vaſt diſproportion between the Numbers of good and bad Men, the World might ſtill be called Κοσμὸς ἀσεβῶν, *the World of the Ungodly.* For not to mention the particular Vices of that perverſe and untracta-

ble People the *Jews*, their Superſtition, their Idolatry, their Infidelity, their Rebelliouſneſs, their Luſt and Luxury, their Uncharity, their Covetouſneſs and the like, the Scripture ſeems to ſpeak of that ſtate and age of the World in general, as if 'twere quite overgrown with Wickedneſs, and as if Vertue were a Stranger among the Dwellings of Men. Thus the Pſalmiſt, *Help me, Lord, for there is not one Godly Man left, the Faithful are miniſhed from among the Children of Men*, Pſal. 12. And again, *The Lord lookt down from Heaven upon the Children of Men to ſee if there were any that would underſtand, and ſeek after God.* And what was the reſult of this Scrutiny? Why, *they are all gone out of way, they are altogether become abominable, there is none that doth good, no not one*, Pſal. 14. And again ſays the Pſalmiſt, ſpeaking of the City of *Jeruſalem*, *I have ſpied Unrighteouſneſs and Strife in the City, Day and Night they go about within the Walls thereof, Miſchief alſo and Sorrow are in the midſt of it; Wickedneſs is therein; Deceit and Guile go not out of their Streets*, Pſal. 55. And again more largely, *Pſal.* 74. *All the Earth is full of Darkneſs and Cruel Habitations.* And again laſtly, to add no more, *They will not be Learned nor Underſtand, all the Foundations of the Earth are out of Courſe*, Pſal. 82.

Thus miſerably deformed was the face of things

things in this ſtate and period of the World: Nor were only the *Morals* of Men univerſally Corrupt, but they had debauched and corrupted their very *Principles* too, and defaced the *Map* that was to guide and direct them, as well as loſt their *Way*. They had almoſt put out the light of Revelation as well as that of Natural Reaſon, ſo that by that time our Saviour appeared in the World, what by ill Gloſſes and worſe Practices, the People of God had almoſt reduced themſelves again to the ſtate of Darkneſs and ſhadow of Death, and defaced the Characters of the *Moſaick Table*, as much as their Forefathers had done thoſe of the *Law* of *Nature*.

But then again, perhaps it will be ſaid, that this was at a time when God had not made any clear and expreſs Revelation of Heaven or Hell; and therefore though Men had a written Law to walk by, yet it being ſupported by no other Sanctions than of temporal Rewards and Puniſhments, they wanted a ſufficient *Counterpoiſe* againſt the violence of Temptations; and than no wonder that Wickedneſs ſhould ſo univerſally prevail, when the Allurements to Vice were ſtrong, and the ingagements to Duty but weak and unconſtraining. But when once Obedience comes to be inforced by better Promiſes and by ſeverer Threatnings, this certainly will introduce a new way of Living; Men

Men will conſider more, and live better, and will never be ſo mad and ſilly as to ſpend a few days in Wickedneſs and Folly, and then in a moment go down to the Grave, and be Damned for ever.

Let us ſee therefore how 'tis with the Moral World under the Revelation of the great *Myſtery of Godlineſs*, and now Life and Immortality are brought to light by the Goſpel; this I think fully anſwers the Objection: Now therefore certainly one would expect at leaſt a ſtate of *Millennial* Happineſs; that Men ſhould be, and live like Angels; that we ſhould ſee the Tabernacle of God come down and abide among Men, with a new Heaven and a new Earth, wherein dwelleth Righteouſneſs. But alas, the Myſtery of Iniquity began to work as ſoon as the Myſtery of Godlineſs; and altho' the Primitive Chriſtians were for a while kept bright and ſhining in the Furnace of Perſecution, yet no ſooner was the heat of their Affliction over, but their Zeal cool'd with it, and they left their firſt Love. For then it was that the great *Dragon* being wroth that the Woman was delivered of a Man child, that *Conſtantine* the Great was Converted by the Church to the Chriſtian Faith, though to overwhelm her by caſting out of his Mouth that mighty Flood of *Arianiſm*. Rev. 12. And altho' the Earth helped the Woman,

man, by opening her Mouth, and ſwallowing up the Flood, which was done when the Firſt *Council* of *Nice* declared againſt that Peſtilent and Prevailing Hereſy; yet 'twas not long before the ſame Dragon caſt forth two other mighty Floods out of his Mouth, and the Chriſtian World ſuffered almoſt an inundation by the breaking in of *Popery* and *Mahumetiſm*.

We have indeed by the Bleſſing of God, and the Zealous Endeavours of good Men, dried up one of thoſe great Floods from a good part of the Chriſtian World, and reſtored the *Doctrin* of the Goſpel to its Primitive Purity and Simplicity. But has the *Reformation* gone on ſo proſperouſly in our *Manners*, as it has in our *Faith*? Are we as *Good* as we are *Orthodox*? I doubt not; for if we look abroad into the World, how little true Goodneſs and Vertue ſhall we find in it! How rare is it to meet with a Man that lives up within ſome tolerable meaſure to the Obligations of his Profeſſion! And how much more rare is it to ſee one that's truly Serious and Conſiderate, Circumſpect and Recollected, that conſiders thoroughly and effectually the End of his coming into the World, the ſhortneſs and uncertainty of his ſtay in it, and what ſhall become of him when he is to go out of it; and accordingly lives under a conſtant and lively ſenſe of God and

of

of his Duty to him, walks with him, and gives up himself wholly to him, makes Religion and the care of his Soul the main business and concern of his Life; works with all his Might while 'tis Day, and is utterly resolved whatever it costs him, to mind and secure the *One thing necessary!* This one would think were no more than what common Sense would prompt any Man to, that would allow himself to think but one Minute in a Year; and yet how few such Men shall we find in the World! Do we not rather see Men drink down Iniquity like Water, and commit Sin with Greediness? Do not the generality of Men live as if they were resolved to sin as much as they could in a little time, and thought it not only safe, but necessary to do ill? Do they not live as if they were to be nothing after this Life, or as if they were to be saved by their Vices rather than by their Vertues; or lastly, as if they thought Hell a better Place than Heaven, and were in love with Damnation and Everlasting Burnings?

But to come a little nearer to our selves, does not the present Age abound with a sort of Men who are Crafty and Designing, False and Treacherous, Rotten and Hypocritical; Men that seem to have their Eye fixed upon, and terminated with the Horizon of this World; that make Gain their Godliness,

and

and Intereſt their Meaſure; that will betray the Church for Preferment, ſell their Religion and their Souls for Mony, that will depart from the way of Truth for the Wages of Unrighteouſneſs, and be Damned hereafter to be Rich and Great here? Never was there more Religion pretended than now, and never leſs in truth and reality; never more noiſe about it, and never a leſs hearty concern for it. What Straining about the Gnat of a Ceremony, with thoſe who can in the mean while Swallow down whole Camels of profitable Abominations! This we may talk of, and lament, but we can't help it. 'Twill be ever ſo with the general courſe of the World; Vice will always have the *Cry* of her ſide, and we are told, that in the latter days *Iniquity ſhall abound, and the love of many ſhall wax cold.* And all this we may learn from the final iſſue and event of things; we may meaſure the ſtate of this World, from the final diſtribution of things in the next. Our Saviour tells us, that *broad is the Way that leads to Deſtruction, and many there be that go in thereat.* And that *ſtrait is the Gate, and narrow is the Way which leads to Life, and few there be that find it,* Mat. 7. 13.

And this we ſhall the leſs wonder at, if we conſider the univerſal pravity and corruptneſs of Human Nature, the Multitude of Temptations we are *all* expoſed to, and the

the peculiar unhappy circumſtances of Living that many Men are ingaged in: To which if we add the great Strength, Cunning and Malice of the Inviſible Powers, that the ſame Envy of the Devil that firſt brought Sin into the World, is ſtill concerned to uphold and increaſe it; that there are two different Intereſts carrying on, that there is a Kingdom of Darkneſs as well as a Kingdom of Light, and a Myſtery of Iniquity, as well as a Myſtery of Godlineſs; we can't think any other, but that the courſe of the World muſt needs be very bad. And the wonder will fall yet lower, if we further conſider how prone we are to confirm and ſtrengthen an ill Cuſtom by our *Imitation* and *Compliance*; which leads me to the Second thing ſuppoſed, that we are naturally apt to imitate that which is moſt prevailing, and to conform to the Courſe and Way of the World.

Now this we are apt to do for one of theſe Two Reaſons; either becauſe we think the generality has the Right of its ſide, and that what moſt Men do, is fit to be done. Or if we do think they are in the wrong, and do amiſs, yet we are loath to venture the Charge of *Singularity*, and withal fancy that there is ſomething of ſafety and excuſe in Numbers and Multitudes.

And Firſt, we are apt to think, that the genera-

generality has the Right of its ſide, and that what moſt Men do, is fit to be done. There is nothing that carries ſo much Authority with it, as the Example of a Multitude; and though every Man is ready to imagin himſelf Wiſer than any one of theſe ſingly, yet when he looks upon them as a Body of Men, there is ſomething awful and commanding in it; the Man bluſhes to himſelf, as we are apt to do when we come into an aſſembly in Publick, though made up of Men, every one of which we think inferior to our ſelves; but their Numbers and Union give them another Air and Appearance, and the Voice of the People becomes to us now as the Voice of God.

'Tis in Practice as in Opinion, what the moſt *hold* we take to be *True*, and ſo what the moſt *do* we take to be *Good*. This is the only Rule ſome People have to go by, and 'tis the Meaſure that all *Popular* Spirits do go by, and the Wiſeſt can hardly refrain it; for we can hardly think it likely, that ſuch an United and Complicated Wiſdom ſhould be miſtaken either in the one or the other. Every Man is apt to reaſon with himſelf in the conduct of his Manners, as *Luther* did in the buſineſs of the Reformation, *Art thou the only Wiſe Man?* And, *can ſo many Worlds err?* What? Shall we oppoſe our ſelves againſt the Practice of Mankind, ſet up for *Reformers*,

mers, row against so great a Stream, and live against the World? Can there be any ill in that which so many do, which is passed into a Custom and a Law, which is practised all the World over? Ought we not rather to suspect our own Judgments, and conclude, that that must needs be the right Point, where so many Lines meet, and that the right Way where we find so many Passengers? This is the common and the Natural Logick of most Men, and by this Measure we proceed both in *Opinion* and in *Practice*, but especially in *Practice*. And this is one cause of our aptness to Conform to the Course and Way of the World. But there is also another.

For Secondly, if we do think that the Generality is in the wrong, and does amiss, yet we are loth to venture the charge of Singularity, and withal fancy that there is something of safety and excuse in Numbers and Multitudes. And first, as to the Charge of *Singularity*, 'tis a dreadful and a frightful Word, and there are but few that have the Courage and the Confidence to stand up against and face the Imputation. We either think the World Wiser than our selves, or would willingly be thought to do so, since this has a shew of Modesty and good Manners, and the contrary seems to carry in it an intolerable degree of Pride and Self-arrogancy.

gency. But now to be Singular in any of our Actions, is interpretatively and in effect, to prefer our own Sense and Judgment, before that of the World, at least as far as concerns the particular case then before us. For since our Actions are governed by our present Sentiments, if we *do* otherwise than the World does, 'tis plain that we *think* otherwise too, and that we set a higher value upon those private Thoughts of ours, than upon the publick Sense and Judgment of the World, which is a very odious and ungrateful thing to own and publish. For we stand in awe of our Fellow Creatures more than we do of our own Consciences, especially when combined and confederated together in great Numbers and Companies, and cannot chuse but regard and revere their Censures and Animadversions. And this makes us willing rather to err with the Multitude, and be Fools for Company, though we act all the while against the clear Light of our own Minds, than incur the great Censure, the heavy *Anathema* of Singularity.

And besides, we think there is no *necessity* neither of running that risque, for we reckon our selves secure enough without it, and are apt to flatter our selves into a fancy that there is something of Safety and Excuse in Numbers and Multitudes. Though we know we are in the ways of Sin, yet we comfort and

incourage our selves to go on in them by thinking how much they are *frequented*, like Travellers wandering in the Dark, who though they know they are out of their way, yet solace themselves in their Number and Company. This is very natural and ordinary for Men to do in all cases, in the case of Sin and Error as well as in others; and therefore the Psalmist speaking of the gathering together of the Froward, and of the insurrection of Wicked Doers, (which supposes them Many and in Companies) immediately adds, *They incourage themselves in Mischief*, Psal. 64. This is a very usual but vain confidence; for however the Multitude of Offenders may be a Security against an Earthly Power, yet God regards *Numbers* no more than *Persons*, and *though hand joyn in hand, the Wicked shall not go unpunished*, Prov. 11. 21.

These are the Grounds and Principles upon which we are inclined to be Conformable to the general Course of the World. But 'tis high time now to shew why we should not be so; and this leads me to consider lastly the Caution it self, that we should not be Conformable to the World. But before I come to justifie this Caution, as to its Equity and Reasonableness, I must premise something concerning its Limits and Measures.

And first this Caution is not so rigorously

to be understood, as if we were not to yield some compliance and conformity with the Humours and Dispositions of those with whom we Converse; for this is a necessary part of Homiletical Vertue, and contributes very much to the sweetning and indearing of Society, and is therefore Good and Commendable, as well as Innocent and Lawful. 'Tis indeed that very thing which we call *Good-nature*, when a Man bends and warps a little from his own natural Posture, to meet and strike in with the inclination of his Companions. And the contrary is so far from being a Vertue, that 'tis a culpable stiffness and obstinacy of Mind; and we may take this for a rule, that Religion is ever consistent with Civility and good Manners, as indeed it is with whatever really conduces to the Comfort and Happiness of Human Life. We are only to take care that our Compliance prove not a Snare to us, an occasion of falling into Sin; that we do not offend God, out of Civility towards Men. In all other cases, we would do well to consider and follow that of the Apostle, *I am made all things to all Men*, 1 Cor. 9. 22. And again, *I please all Men in all things*, 10. 33.

Neither again Secondly, is this Caution to be so rigorously understood, as if we were forbidden to conform to the several indifferent Modes of Ages or of Countries, either

as to Customs or Ceremonies, whether Religious or Civil, or Habits, or manner of Address, or way of Diet, or the like. For however these may not possibly be ordered according to the best convenience or measure of Discretion, yet 'tis according to the publick Wisdom of the Place and Nation, (for the Wisdom of a Nation is seen as much in their *Customs* as in their *Proverbs*,) and therefore the matter of them being supposed indifferent, 'tis not civil or modest to contradict them. And there is this further to be considered, that besides the pride and rudeness of such an opposition, all the advantage or convenience a Man can get by it, will not compensate for the Odium and Censure of Affectation and Singularity. And accordingly we find, that the Wisest of Men in all Ages have ever thought it Prudence to conform to the Innocent, though otherwise not so convenient Customs of the Age and Place wherein they lived. And 'tis observed concerning our Blessed Saviour himself, who was the Wisdom of the Eternal Father, that when he condescended to put on Flesh, and live among Men, he condescended yet further, and complied with all the received Customs and Manners of the *Jewish* Nation. And indeed he became in all things like unto his Brethren, Sin only excepted; *Innocence* was his only Singularity.

And

And this, in one Word, is our meaſure; we may and ought to be conformable as far as the bounds of Innocence; *uſque ad Aras* is the meaſure of our civil Converſation, as well as of our Friendſhip and dearer Intimacies: For why ſhould we ſhew ſo much diſreſpect to our Company, as to quit the Road they have taken, if we may ſafely travel in it? The Conformity therefore which we are here cautioned againſt, is that of Imitating the general Practice of the World, as to Actions, not of a *Civil* but of a *Moral* Nature: We muſt not be Conform'd to the general Morals of this World; the Reaſon and Equity of which Caution I come now to juſtify.

And the firſt Reaſon why we muſt not be Conform'd to this World, is becauſe this is not ſuch a World as we may ſafely imitate, 'tis not a World for us to be Conformed to; it never was ſo even in the Beſt and Pureſt Times, much leſs is it now, in theſe laſt and worſt days. 'Tis not ſafe following the Multitude at any *time*, much leſs now; nor in any *thing*, but leaſt of all in the ordering our Life and Converſation. 'Tis a very ill Guide in matters of Opinion, but much worſe in matters of Practice; for the World is a meer Theatre of Folly, a Stage of Vice and Debauchery, one great *Aceldama* of Blood and Cruelty, and to uſe the Deſcrip-

tion of St. *John, the whole World lieth in Wickedness, Joh.* 5. 19. the Words are Emphatical, ἐν τῷ πονηρῷ κεῖται, it has not only fallen into the Gulph of Sin, but it lies there contentedly and quietly. 'Tis not only slightly dipt or stain'd with the Waters of Impurity, but it lies as it were *Moated round*, or rather all over drench'd and soak'd in them, like the Earth in the Universal Deluge: But this I need pursue no further, having already made it a distinct Member of my Discourse.

Again Secondly, another Reason why we must not be Conformed to this World, is because by so doing, we shall confirm and strengthen the cause of Wickedness, and give it Settlement, Succession and Perpetuity: For we shall countenance and imbolden those whom we imitate, and cause others to imitate us, and they again will be a President to others, and so on, 'till Vice pretend to the Right of Custom and Prescription, and Iniquity be established by a Law. This is one great Reason why the World is so bad now, and 'tis the best expedient the Devil has to make it yet worse; for by this the Vices of the former Ages descend upon the future, Sin becomes Hereditary, Children transcribe their vicious Parents, and actual, like Original Sin, is intail'd upon Posterity. *Fill ye up the Measure of your Fathers*, Mat. 23. 32. said our Saviour by way of Prophecy to

the *Jews*, implying that they would do so; for our Lord very well knew the Temper of those to whom he said it; and I question not but that most of the wickedness of that Nation was owing to this, that they were so generally possessed with this Superstitious Humour of *Conformity*, and were resolved to do as their Forefathers had done before them.

Again Thirdly, another Reason why we Christians must not Conform to this World, is because both the *Precepts* and the *Rewards* of our Religion require a very different method of Life from what is ordinarily practised; the Precepts are strict and severe, and the Rewards high and noble, such indeed as cannot be conceived for their greatness, and they both call for a very excellent and extraordinary way of Conversation; for after the common way of Living, we shall neither *obtain* the one, nor *fulfil* the other. Indeed our Religion obliges us to great Strictness and Singularity, and a Christian cannot be like himself if he be like other Men. To be a Christian indeed, is to be a *New Creature*, to be New in Nature, and New in Life and Conversation; he must not be like his former self, much less like the rest of the World. The Argument is the Apostle's, *Ye are all the Children of Light, and the Children of the Day*; that is, Christians,

Professors of an holy and excellent Religion, whose Precepts are excellently Good, and whose Promises are excellently Great. And what then? *Therefore let us not Sleep as do others, but let us Watch and be Sober,* 1 Thes. 5. 5, 6.

Again Fourthly and Lastly, We Christians have one more peculiar Reason not to be conformed to this World; we have renounced it in our Baptism, with all its Pomps and Vanities: By which are meant, not only the Heathen Games and Spectacles, their vain Shews, and loose Festivities, their lewd *Bacchanals* and *Saturnals*, which we renounce *Absolutely*, and the Wealth and Glory and Grandeur even of the *Christian* World, as often as they prove inconsistent with the ends of our Holy Institution; but also the promiscuous company, the general Practices, and the popular Examples of this World, which are generally so very corrupt and Wicked, that we renounce them not upon supposition, as in the other instance, but at a venture. The very first step to a Christian Life, is to dye to the World, and to its general Usages and Customs; and if we will follow Christ, we must forsake the *Multitudes*, and ascend up to the Mount of Solitude and Holy Separation.

And that we may be the better incouraged to undertake this *Religious Singularity*, let us to the Reason of the thing, add two very remarkable

remarkable Scripture Examples. The Firſt that invites our Conſideration, is that of *Lot*, who happened to live in a City ſo prodigiouſly wicked, and beyond all Meaſure or Example Debauched, that though a very Populous Place, it could not afford ſo much as *Ten* good Men, they were ſo univerſally ſeiz'd with the Peſt and Contagion of Vice. And yet this good Man, though he breath'd in ſo corrupt an Air, was not at all infected with it; the health and cleanneſs of his Soul, like that of *Socrates*'s Body, was too ſtrong for the Contagion, and preſerved him from the Malignity of a Plauge that was more infectuous and more mortal too, than that of *Athens*. Indeed the filthy Converſation of that wicked Place, diſturb'd his *Quiet*, but it could not ſully his *Innocence*; it *vex'd* his Righteous Soul, as the Text ſays, 2 *Pet.* 2. 8. but it could not *Debauch* it. He dwelt like the Church of *Pergamos*, where Satan's Seat was, *Rev.* 2. 13. in the very *Metropolis*, the Imperial City of the Devil's Kingdom; but he Convers'd there like an Angel of Light among Fiends and evil Spirits. He was ſurrounded with the works of Darkneſs, but he had no Fellowſhip with them; his *Company* was Deviliſh, but his *Converſation* was Angelical; though he could not make them better, yet they could

could not make him worſe; he lived *with* them, but he lived *againſt* them.

This indeed was great and extraordinary; but there is an Example of Religious Singularity beyond this, and that is in *Noah*, who lived in a *World* that was as corrupt, and more than the other's City; the whole World then was but one greater *Sodom*, nay it was much worſe than that Seat of Wickedneſs. *Sodom* indeed was ſo given up to Debauchery, that it could not yield Ten Righteous Perſons, but the whole World in *Noah*'s time could not afford ſo much as *Two*; he himſelf was the only good Man then in the World, as may reaſonably be concluded from that Reaſon expreſſed by God why he excepted him from the general Deluge, *For thee have I ſeen Righteous before me in this Generation*, Gen. 7. 1. Now 'tis impoſſible to imagin that Vice ſhould ever be more in mode and faſhion than it was then, when as the Text ſays, *all Fleſh had Corrupted his way upon the Earth*, and the whole Earth it ſelf was *fill'd with Violence*. And yet in this all-over-wicked World, *Noah* maintained his Innocence, and his Integrity ſhin'd forth as a Light in the midſt of this Crooked and Perverſe Generation, and was not only a *Doer*, but a *Preacher* of Righteouſneſs. In other Ages of the World, though never ſo Corrupt, Religion and Vertue has had ſome Party,

Party, and the Singularity of Living well, is ſhared and divided among ſeveral, and one is a Countenance and Incouragement to another; but here poor ſingle *Noah* was fain to *Live*, as *Athanaſius* was to *Diſpute*, againſt the *World*, and the whole Singularity *lodged* and *center'd* in his ſingle Perſon, which puts it beyond all Example or Parallel.

And thus have I gone through the ſeveral Stages of my Undertaking, I ſhall now make one or two brief Reflections upon the whole, and conlude.

In relation therefore to the Firſt Suppoſition, it may be inferr'd, That the Multitude is no ſafe Guide, and that the Meaſures of Right and Wrong are not always to be concluded from the conſent of *Majority*; for you ſee here, that *Vice* has by much the Majority of its ſide; and yet 'tis Vice ſtill.

From the Second, it may be inferr'd, That thoſe who have already a Majority for their way, ought not to think their Cauſe any whit the better for having new Proſelytes every day brought over to them, and becauſe Men flock to their Standard from every Quarter. For, as it has been diſcourſed, this is no more than what is to be expected from the ordinary courſe of things. Men are naturally apt to imitate that which is moſt prevailing, and to conform to the courſe and way of the World. Thoſe there-

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fore that value themselves on their Cause the better for this, seem not to understand the World, but to be meer Strangers to the Inclinations of Human Nature; for did they consider that, they would quickly perceive, that this does not reflect any Credit upon their Cause, but rather upbraids the levity and weakness of Mankind, and is no argument that *they* themselves are *Wise*, but only that *other* Men are *Fools*.

Lastly, from the Caution it self, we may justly infer, that the Censure of *Preciseness* and *Singularity* which the Men of this World commonly charge upon good Men, and the Hatred and Spite wherewith they prosecute them upon that very account, are both of them utterly senseless and extreamly absurd: This has been an old Grudge. Thus the Sinners in the Book of Wisdom, *Wisd.* 2. *Let us lie in wait for the Righteous, because he is not for our turn, and he is clean contrary to our doings: He upbraideth us with our offending the Law, and objecteth to our Infamy the transgressings of our Education.* And again, *He was made to reprove our Thoughts; He is grievous to us even to behold, for his Life is not like other Mens, his Ways are of another Fashion.* A very high Charge indeed, and as notable an Inference; he lives otherwise and better than we do, and therefore we must hate and persecute him. But this I say is a very absurd

ſurd and unreaſonable way of proceeding; for the ground of the buſineſs if ſifted to the bottom, comes to no more than this, They are angry with a Man for not loving their Company ſo well as to be content to be Damned for the ſake on't. But I think we may with great Civility beg their excuſe in this matter; if they will have us do as they do, then let them take care to do as they *ſhould* do. But for a Man to make himſelf a *Beaſt*, utterly unfit to be converſ'd with, and then to call me Singular and Unſociable, becauſe I won't keep him Company, is hard meaſure.

And as theſe Men are guilty of an unreaſonable Charge, ſo ſhall we be guilty of an inexcuſable Folly and Weakneſs, if we depart from our Duty and our greateſt Intereſt upon ſuch a trifling inconſiderable Diſcouragement: For then 'tis plain, that we are of the number of thoſe low and unconſidering Spirits, that *love the Praiſe of Men more than the Praiſe of God.*

Let us not therefore be led away with Noiſe and Popularity, nor be frighted from our Duty by thoſe empty Anathema's of the Multitude, the Cenſure of Unſociableneſs, Preciſeneſs and Singularity. Let us be ſure by doing our Duty, to ſatisfy our own Conſciences, whatever others *do* or *think*. Let us not be carried away in the Polluted torrent

rent of the Age, nor be Fools for Company. Let us for once dare to be *Wise*, and be guilty of the great Singularity of doing well, and of acting like Men and Christians; and then, if we can have the liking and approbation of the World, well; if not, the comfort is, we shall not much want it: And we shall gain something by our *Singularity*, which the others cannot by their *Numbers*, the Favour of God, and deliverance from the Wrath to come.

A Discourse concerning the Excellency of Praise and Thanksgiving.

Preach'd in *All-Souls* College Chapel in *Oxford*, upon the Founder's Commemoration Day.

Psal. 50. 23. *Whoso offereth Praise, glorifieth me*; Or, as in the other Translation,

Whoso offereth me Thanks and Praise, he honoureth me.

TO Honour and Glorifie God, as 'tis the *End* of the *whole*, so is it the *Duty* and *Priviledg* of all the *Rational* and Intellectual part of the Creation. God indeed has made all things for his Glory, and he fails not to glorifie himself one way or other by all things that he has made; but there are some things which he has made to glorifie him by free and proper acts of Worship and Homage. And these as he has more *inabled*,

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ſo has he more *obliged* to the Performance of this Divine Office, by diſtinguiſhing them as well by *Favours* and *Benefits*, as by Order of Being, and degrees of natural Excellence from the reſt of the Creation.

Among theſe is *Man*, who though at preſent not ſo capable of this Divine Imploy as ſome of the other Intellectual Orders, yet he has as much, perhaps more Obligation to it than any of them all; ſince God has not only favour'd him with peculiar Benefits, ſuch as the Grace of Repentance, the Honour of being Perſonally united to the Divinity, *&c.* but has alſo placed him in ſuch a Sphere where he is the only Creature that can acknowledge and pay Religious Service to the common Creator. All other Creatures praiſe God only *Paſſively*, as far as they carry in them the Characters of the Divine Perfections, which muſt be conſidered and acknowledged before they redound to the *actual* glory of the Creator. Like a *Lute*, which though never ſo Harmonically Set and Tuned, yields no Muſick till its Strings be artfully touched by a Skilful Hand. But Man can freely command and ſtrike the Strings of his own Heart and Affections, and is the only Creature here below that can *Actively* praiſe and honour his great Maker and Benefactor. Man therefore is concern'd to honour and glorifie God both

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for himſelf and for all the Creatures round about him; and as the whole World is the *Temple* of the great God, ſo Man is as it were the *Prieſt* in this Region of it, where he muſt undertake the Office of honouring and glorifying God, not only in his own, but alſo in the name of all this brute and uncapable part of the Creation. And he is here taught how to do it in theſe Words of the Pſalmiſt, *whoſo offers me Thanks and Praiſe, he Honours me, or he Glorifies me.*

By *Honour* or *Glory* here, I ſuppoſe is meant whatever comes within the Notion of Religious Service, or Divine Worſhip; and when 'tis ſaid, that he who offers God Thanks and Praiſe, he it is that Honours him; I ſuppoſe 'tis ſpoken Emphatically, and by way of Eminence, importing as much as if 'twere ſaid, He it is that honours him more particularly, and performs a more ſpecial piece of Religious Service. So that from the Words I ſhall in the Firſt place collect this Propoſition, That the moſt principal and moſt acceptable part of Religion conſiſts in Praiſe and Thankſgiving.

Secondly, I ſhall conſider what are the things we are concern'd chiefly to thank God for; among which I ſhall particularly inſiſt upon that Providential diſpoſal of Men in ſuch outward Conditions and Circumſtances of Life, as may be of

advantage to further their Eternal Intereſt.

Thirdly, I ſhall briefly repreſent to you, that the Circumſtances of your Life are ſuch.

Whence in the laſt place, I ſhall commend this Inference to your Conſideration, that you are therefore highly obliged to the Duty of Praiſe and Thankſgiving.

The Firſt thing to be ſpoken to is, that the moſt principal and moſt acceptable part of Religion conſiſts in Praiſe and Thankſgiving. I confeſs I am not very fond of making Compariſons between acts of Religion, being not ignorant of what Religion it ſelf has ſuffered upon this very account, among a certain Generation of Men who ſet up one Duty of Religion againſt another, as *Preaching* againſt *Praying*. Nor ſhould I do it here, but that I have for ſome time obſerved, that the Price of this Duty is generally *beaten down*, and the Duty it ſelf but *ſeldom* and but *coldly* practiſed even among them who make Great account of all the reſt, and are more particularly addicted to a Life of Piety and Devotion. The Parable of the Ten Lepers is a true Draught and Image of Mankind; all Ten Prayed, being under a great neceſſity to do ſo, but there was but one who bethought himſelf, and gave thanks. And ſo 'tis in the World, where to ten that Pray, 'tis well if there be

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one that gives Thanks; and even that one ſhall perhaps Pray ten times, before he gives thanks once: And when he does, it ſhan't be perhaps with half the Zeal and Affection wherewith he is wont to *Pray*; which procedure by the way, I know not how to reſolve into any other Principle than this, that when we *Pray*, 'tis for our ſelves and our own Intereſt, to procure ſome good, or to avoid ſome evil; but when we give *Thanks* 'tis to God, and for God, without any Self-regard, as I ſhall further ſhew by and by. This I conceive is it that makes Men generally more frequent and more zealous in their Prayers than in their Praiſes. Whereas indeed the latter calls for greater Affection and Elevation of Spirit than the former, Praiſe being a greater glorification of God than Prayer, and indeed than any other Act of Religion.

This I might make appear from ſeveral grounds of Argument; but not to burthen my Diſcourſe or your Patience with Unneceſſaries, I ſhall confine my ſelf to this ſingle Conſideration, That to Praiſe and give Thanks to God, is the moſt unſelfiſh and diſintereſſed act of Religion we can poſſibly honour him with, and conſequently the moſt noble and generous of all. The Conſequence I ſuppoſe will readily be acknowledged, that if it be really the moſt diſ-intereſſed

reſſed act of Religion, 'tis alſo the moſt noble and excellent; for the leſs there is of *Self*, and the more there is of *God* in any Religious Performance, the more perfect 'tis allowed to be; and though we do not with ſome, make it neceſſary to the goodneſs of an Action, that it be *unmercenary*, and done without any proſpect of Reward, yet the Reaſon is, becauſe 'tis too high a mark for a mortal aim. We think it a Meaſure hardly Practicable by *any*, and therefore not neceſſary to *all*; not denying in the mean while, but rather ſuppoſing, that if we could act by ſuch a Meaſure, it would be an higher and more noble Pitch of Vertue. Taking therefore the Argument for granted, I ſhall think my ſelf further concern'd only to juſtify the *Under-Propoſition*, by ſhewing that 'tis really the moſt diſ-intereſſed part of Religion.

Now that it is ſo, will be ſufficiently evident from this, that it reſpects the Benefits of God meerly as they are *paſt*; it has indeed the Goodneſs of God for its Object, as well as many other acts of Religion, but with this Difference, that whereas other acts of Religion reſpect the Benefits of God as they are to *come*, this reſpects them as *paſt*, and conſequently can have no Eye upon future Advantage. He indeed that gives Thanks may, but not as, and ſo far as he gives

gives thanks: It may be the End of the *Agent*, but not of the *Action*. For obſerve, though to give thanks for Bleſſings received be really a Means to procure more, as well as other Religious acts, yet there is this difference, that other acts are not only Means to Bleſſings, but may be uſed as ſuch to that end, without deſtroying the nature of the acts themſelves. But now Gratitude towards God, though it be really in it ſelf, as much a Means in order to future Bleſſings, yet it can't be uſed and intended to that purpoſe, without ſo far undoing the very *Nature* as well as *Excellency* of the Action: For if I give Thanks meerly to get more, if that be my deſign, this is not Gratitude, but only another way of *Begging*, and ſo my Praiſing will indeed fall in and be confounded with Praying, which are ſuppoſed to be diſtinct. So that the very notion of Thankſgiving excludes all regard to Self-intereſt; and what ſome highflown Theoriſts have aſſerted of Vertue in *general*, that it loſes its very Being and Perfection, by being Mercenary or done upon motives of Intereſt is ſtrictly true, of this *particular* Vertue, whoſe very Idea ſhuts out all reſpect to ſelf-advantage.

The ſhort is, this vertue of Thankfulneſs, though it be converſant about the goodneſs and beneficialneſs of the Divine Nature,

which is alſo ſuppoſed to be actually exerciſed upon us, yet it does not reſpect it in order to our Intereſt, but as 'tis a Moral Perfection of the ſame Divine Nature, and ſo is rather an humble acknowledgment of ſomething excellent in God, whoſe Perfections we adore and bear witneſs to, than an Addreſs to him for ſomething of advantage to our ſelves, which as I ſaid before, its very Idea excludes, and cannot at all comport with.

But now this is more than can be ſaid of any of the other acts of Religion; when we *Pray*, 'tis for the Relief of our Wants; our *Faith* leans upon ſome future Good, and our *Hope* is a comfortable expectation of it; and even *Charity* it ſelf as it reſpects God, has a mixture of ſelf-regard in it, I ſay as far as it reſpects *God*. For it muſt be yielded (whatever ſome pretend to the contrary,) that there is ſome ſort of Love which may be diſintereſſed and pure from any ſelfiſh Principle, namely Love of *Benevolence*, whereby we may wiſh well and do well to our Neighbour purely for *his* Good, without proſecting any Advantage to our ſelves. But then this is not that Love wherewith we love God, who is not capable of our *Benevolence*, but only of our *Deſire*: For when we love God, we don't pretend to wiſh any good to him who is already poſſeſs'd of all; but only

ly wish him as a Good to our selves, which is the same as to desire him. Charity therefore as it respects God, is the same with desire of him, and all love of Desire is founded upon Indigence, and proceeds from Self-interest. So inconsistent and unprincipled is the Discourse of those who talk of Loving God purely for himself and his own absolute Perfections, without regarding our own advantage therein. We may indeed love our *Neighbour* so, but so we cannot love God; for to love God, is to desire him, to desire him as our Good and Happiness, and all love of Desire proceeds from *Want*, and ends in *Fullness*. And if Love it self must give the Precedency to Thanksgiving, I suppose none of the other acts of Religion will offer at a competition with it.

But you'll say, does not our Saviour call Love the First and the Great Commandment? To this I answer, that by Love there is meant either Love of Benevolence, or Love of Desire; if Love of Benevolence, that is no immediate act of *Religion*, God not being capable of being so loved, as was urged before: And therefore we may allow this to be the principal Commandment, without any contradiction to the present Discourse which proceeds wholly concerning Acts of Religion. But if the love here spoken of, be love of *Desire*, than this is said to be

which is also supposed to be actually exercised upon us, yet it does not respect it in order to our Interest, but as 'tis a Moral Perfection of the same Divine Nature, and so is rather an humble acknowledgment of something excellent in God, whose Perfections we adore and bear witness to, than an Address to him for something of advantage to our selves, which as I said before, its very Idea excludes, and cannot at all comport with.

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the Firſt and the Great Commandment, not becauſe it excells all the reſt by its own *proper* value, but becauſe it vertually contains, and is productive of them all, there being nothing ſo difficult or naturally diſpleaſing which he that truly loves, that is, *Deſires* God, will refuſe to do for his ſake. And therefore 'tis, that in another place, Love is ſaid to be the *fulfilling of the Law*, Rom. 13. 10. that is, vertually and potentially, as 'tis a general Mother Vertue, and the principle of a more particular and ſpecial Obedience. And in this reſpect indeed Love is the firſt and the great Commandment; but if we conſider the proper dignity and excellence of the Action, he that *praiſes* God honours him more, and expreſſes himſelf more generouſly than he that *Loves* him. For he that loves God, loves him for his own good, in order to his Happineſs and well-being; but he that praiſes him (ſo far as he does ſo,) does it not upon any ſelf-end, but meerly becauſe he thinks it juſt and equitable that a Creature ſhould acknowledg and adore the Excellency of his Creator; which certainly is the *nobleſt* as well as the *juſteſt* thing a Creature can do.

Indeed *Love* is the only Divine or Religious Vertue that can with any pretence vye with Praiſe and Thankſgiving; and accordingly 'tis obſervable, that of all the vertu-

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ous acts and habits that are now requisite to qualify a Man for Heaven, none shall be thought worthy to be retained in it, but only these Two, *Praise* and *Love*; all the rest shall be *super-annuated* and cease, as having no further occasion for their Exercise; these two only shall remain to be the entertainment of Angels and Angelical Spirits to all Eternity.

But though Divine Love be equal with Praise as to this respect, in point of *Permanence* and Duration, yet in point of *Generosity* it comes far short of it; for indeed to speak properly, Love is no further excellent, than as it partakes of the nature of Praise; no further than as 'tis one way of acknowledging the Divine Perfections. For what commendation is it for me to Love what is my good, and makes for my Interest any otherwise than as by loving, I acknowledge and bear witness to the excellency and amiableness of the Object beloved? That therefore which is excellent in Love, is not my *Coveting* the Divine Good, (which I do purely for my own Pleasure and Profit,) but by *bearing witness* to it. And yet even here Praise will have the Preeminence, because this acknowledges the Divine Perfections *Directly* and *Expressly*, which the other does only *Implicitly* and by *Consequence*. So that in every respect, Praise and Thanksgiving will

will be found to be the greatest honour and glorification of God, which sufficiently establishes the Proposition laid down, That the most principal and most acceptable part of Religion consists in Praise and Thanksgiving.

And here before I go any further, give me leave by the way, First to deplore the general defect of our common Closet-Devotions; Secondly, To commend the excellent Constitution of our Publick Liturgy. As to the First, 'tis a sad thing to consider, that so Divine and so Angelical a Service as that of Praise and Thanksgiving, which is so highly preferred in the Sacred Writings, and which the Man after God's own Heart was so very eminent and remarkable for, the *Burthen* of whose Devotion lay in *Anthem* and *Alleluiahs*, should be so neglected and so little regarded as it is: That that which is so much the imployment and business of *Heaven*, should be so little valued upon *Earth*; and what the *Angels* esteem so Divine a Service, should have so little share in the Devotions of *Men*. There are but few even of the Devouter sort, that are duly sensible of the excellency of Praise, and those that have a considerable sense of it, are generally very backward to the Duty, and very cold in the Performance. Our Necessities often call us to our *Prayers*, and supply

his with Devotion in them; but as for *Praise*, it seems a dead and heartless Service, and we care not how seldom or how indifferently it be performed. Which common Backwardness of ours, the Scripture also supposes by its earnest and frequent Exhortations to this Duty.

But the *Church* of *England* (to her great Commendation be it spoken,) proceeds by another Measure in her Devotions, enjoyning *Praise* as largely and as frequently as *Prayer*; she has taken her Copy from the Man after God's own Heart; and as *Hosanna* and *Allelujah*, Prayer unto God, and Praises of God, divide the whole Book of Psalms, so do they her Liturgy, which is a Service of *Praise*, as well as of *Prayer*. This the Church admonishes us of, in the very Preface and Entrance of her Excellent Service, telling us, that we *Assemble and Meet together, to render Thanks for the great Benefits that we have received at God's hands, and to set forth his most worthy Praise.* Then the Priest, *Praise ye the Lord*, to which the People, *The Lord's Name be Praised.* And this is done in all our Hymns, as the *Venite*, *O come let us Sing unto the Lord*, &c. And in that noble Hymn called the *Te Deum*, *We Praise thee O God, we acknowledge thee to be the Lord.* Thus again in the *Benedictus*, *Blessed be the Lord God of* Israel, *&c.* where we

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bless God for the Redemption of the World by Christ; which also we do in the *Jubilate*, and in the Blessed Virgins *Magnificat*, *My Soul doth magnify the Lord*, &c. So again in the *Cantate Domino*, and the *Nunc Dimittis*, and *Deus Miseratur*, *Let the People praise thee O God, let all the People praise thee.* Besides the *Gloria Patri*, and many particular Offices of Thanksgiving, and the whole Psalter of *David*, which is a considerable part of the Church Service. So truly sensible was the wisdom of our excellent Mother, both of the great worth and importance of this Duty of Praise, and of the general Backwardness and Coldness of Men in applying themselves to it.

But I proceed now in the Second place, to consider what are the things we are chiefly concerned to Praise and Thank God for. These in general are those things which relate to our Spiritual Concern, and our grand Interest in another World; for the same general Order is to be observed both in our Prayers and in our Praises; and as we are chiefly to *Pray* for Spiritual Blessings, so 'tis for them that we are chiefly to return *Thanks*. More particularly we are concerned to thank God (as the Wisdom of our excellent Chuch directs us,) for his inestimable Love in the Redemption of the World by our Lord Jesus Christ, for the means of Grace,

and

and for the hopes of Glory. And among theſe means of Grace, I think we are not in the laſt place concerned to thank him for diſpoſing us in ſuch outward circumſtances of Life as are advantagious to our Salvation, it being hardly imaginable how much the diverſity of theſe contributes to our Living well or ill. How many Perſons of excellent Diſpoſitions, of great Attainments, and of greater Hopes, have we known to beutterly ſpoiled and ruined, meerly by falling into ill hands; as we have it recorded of the young Diſciple of St. *John*, in *Eccleſiaſtick Story?* and ſo again on the other hand, how many Perſons of Vicious Inclinations, and more vicious Lives, have been diverted out of the Road of Deſtruction, meerly by ſome accidential Occurrence, ſome little Providential hit that happened to croſs their way!

There is an *Ingenious Gentleman* of conſiderable Character and Figure in the Learned World, who makes that Grace of God whereby he conducts Men to Holineſs and Happineſs, to be nothing elſe but only a happy train or diſpoſition of external Circumſtances and Occurrences. As ſuppoſe a Man falls into ſome very ſharp Affliction, which works him into a ſoftneſs and tenderneſs of Mind; while he is under this ſenſible and pliant diſpoſition, he happens to meet with

with a good Book, which ſtrikes upon the ſame String of his Soul; after this, he lights into good Company, where the former Diſpoſition receives a new and further improvement; and ſo on in a train of Accidents, the latter ſtill renewing the Impreſſion of the former, till at length the Man is perfectly brought over to a new Order and Habit both of Mind and Life.

Now though for ſeveral weighty Reaſons, too many to be here alledged, I cannot be of this Gentleman's Mind, ſo far as to make the Divine Grace (which in Scripture is frequently aſcribed to the Holy Spirit of God working within us,) to be nothing elſe but a courſe of well-laid Circumſtances; yet I may and muſt needs ſay, that I think the outward Circumſtances of Life, have a very great ſtroak upon the moral conduct of it, and that the *ſucceſs* of inward Grace does very much depend upon outward Occurrences. For not to argue from the different manner of *Education* upon which the quality of our future life does generally as much depend, as the fortune of the *Soul* does upon its delivery out of the Hand, 'tis common and eaſy to obſerve, that ſome Men are ingaged in ſuch unhappy Circumſtances, as do almoſt neceſſitate them to be Vicious; while others again are ſo advantagiouſly placed, as if God had laid a *Plot* for their Salvation.

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The ground of this unequal Dispensation, 'tis neither easie nor at present *necessary* to account for, and I believe we may put it among those Difficulties whose Solution is reserved to the Coming of *Elias*, as the *Jews* love to speak of all desperate Problems. In the mean time however, this is certain, that those who are distinguished from the Multitude by such advantagious circumstances, have great reason to bless God for making the *work* of their Salvation so *Easie*, and the *Issue* of it so *Secure*, for thus disposing them, and setting them in order for Eternal Life. For however the glory of doing well be inhanced by circumstances of disadvantage, as 'tis spoken to the credit of the Church of *Pergamos*, that she held fast the Faith even where Satan's Seat was; *Rev.* 2. 13. yet of such vast moment is the business of our Salvation, that a Wise Considering Man would prefer such circumstances as add rather to the *Security*, than to the *Weight* of his Crown. 'Tis too great a stake to be hazarded for the glory of a greater Excellence, whether of Vertue or of Reward; and therefore though a Life of *Temptation* may possibly serve to that, yet our Saviour in consideration of our state and danger, has taught us to pray that we may not enter into it.

And for the same reason that we *deprecate* such circumstances of Life as are apt to *hinder*,

der, we are concerned to *Pray* for such as are apt to *further* us in the way of our Salvation; and our Saviour could intend no less, by his *Lead us not into Temptation*, than that we should pray that God would lead us into such circumstances of Living, as may not only be no hindrance, but an advantage and furtherance to our Salvation. And if it concerns us to *Pray* for such, then also to give *Thanks* for them. We ought indeed to Bless God for every thing that contributes never so little to so great an End, much more for disposing us in such a state and way of Life, where we have few Temptations but to do well, and are as it were under a *Course* of Salvation.

And this (my Brethren,) I take to be very much your case, and that the circumstances of your Life are in a great measure such as I have now described; for not to mention your grand, though common Priviledge of Christianity, which divides you from above half the World, and your more peculiar Priviledge of being Members of a Reformed Church, and that too the Best of those which are Reformed, where there is such excellent Provision made for all the Purposes of a Christian Life; where you have not only all the *Substantials* of Christian Religion, but those also most excellently Ordered and Disposed according to the best

best measures of Human Wisdom; particularly where you have such an excellent Liturgy, so Wisely and so Divinely Composed, as might be used even by the Angels in Heaven, were there any need of Praying there; I say, not to insist upon these things, I shall proceed to what is more Personal and Peculiar, and briefly represent to you the advantagiousness of your present Circumstances upon these Two Considerations.

First, that you here enjoy all the Advantages of Serving God in the way of a *Contemplative* Life.

Secondly, that you here enjoy also all the Advantages of fitting and qualifying your selves to serve both him and the Publick, in an *Active* Life, whenever you shall be called to it.

And First, as to a *Contemplative* Life; This is immediately and properly a Life of Religion and Devotion, and absolutely considered, is the most perfect of any: This the School-men and Mystical Divines commonly represent under the Figure of *Martha* and *Mary*, the former of which they suppose to be the Picture of an *Active* Life, and the latter of a *Contemplative*. And whereas *Mary* is said to have chosen the *Better part*, this they think a Warrant to give the preference to a Contemplative Life. Whether it be or no, I will not dispute, but I think the pre-

ference it self is just, and that a Contemplative Life absolutely considered, has the greater Perfection. For though there be great excellency in an Active Life, yet 'tis meerly with relation to the present Exigence; and though the Habit of Charity shall (as the Apostle discourses, 1 *Cor.* 13. 8.) remain for ever; yet these present instances and expresses of it are calculated purely for this Life, and shall utterly cease in the next. But now the *Contemplative* Life is to last for ever, and to be the Entertainmet of that state where there is nothing but meer Excellence, where all that is imperfect shall be done away.

And this is that Life which your present circumstances both invite you to, and further you in; here your *Thoughts* are your own, and so is your *Time* too wherein to employ them; here you live a Life free and dis-ingaged from all worldly Incumbrances and Secular Avocations, and blest with all possible Advantages for a Contemplative and Affectionate Religion: Here you have Solitude, Retirement, and Leisure, and so may serve God without *Distraction*, and without *Disturbance*. And you can hardly well imagin till you have tried it, of how great advantage this last thing is to a Devotional Life. *He that has little Business shall be Wise*, says he that was so: I may add, and shall be

be good too. Leiſure is a great Friend to Meditation, and that to Religion. But Buſineſs is an Enemy to both; for believe me, 'tis very hard to keep up the Spirit of Devotion in Multiplicity of Affairs. He that is thus troubled about many things, is not in the way of *Extraordinary* Religion: 'Tis well if ſuch a one can mind the One thing neceſſary, and diſcharge the Offices of Common Life. But this is not your caſe, you have Time, and you have Leiſure in abundance; you have little elſe to do, but to trim your Lamps, to adorn your *Interiour*, and to perfect Holineſs in the Fear of God. In ſhort, your very Profeſſion is to be *Religious*; you live in a place where the Order of the Morning and Evening Sacrifice is duly obſerved, where you have ſtated Hours of Prayer and Thankſgiving to ſerve God in *Publick*, and all the *reſt* of your Time is one continued Opportunity of ſerving him in *Private*. So that you may be ſaid, conſidering the Advantagiouſneſs of your Circumſtances, to be in the very Emphaſis of the Phraſe, τεταγμένοι εἰς ζωὴν, to ſtand in order, and rightly diſpoſed for Heaven, and your whole Life may be properly called a *Day* of Salvation.

And as you here enjoy all the Advantages of ſerving God in the way of a *Contemplative* Life, ſo Secondly, you have here alſo all

the Advantages of fitting your selves to serve both him and the Publick in an *Active* Life whenever you shall be called to it: For besides, that what makes you Good and Religious here, serves also to make you useful and servicable hereafter, a Pious and a Well-principled Education being the best Preparative for a Life of Publick Action and Employment; besides this, you have all the Advantages of Learning that *Books* and *Conversation*, and *Leisure* to make the best use and improvement of both can possiby afford: So that there is no Imployment or Profession either in Church or State, either Spiritual or Secular, but what you have here the best Helps and Advantages to fit your selves for.

And now since there is so much Excellency in Praise and Thanksgiving, and since we are particularly obliged to bless God for Advantagious Circumstances of Life; and since the Circumstances of your present Life appear to be eminently such, let me in the last place commend this to your serious Consideration, Whether you are not therefore highly obliged to the Duty of Praise and Thanksgiving.

Certainly if any Persons in the World are, you are, who are best qualified to understand the transcendent excellency of it, and also lie under the greatest Obligations and Inducements to it: Indeed you can never

enough

enough bleſs God for the Happy Opportunities of Religion you enjoy in this Place, where you are like the *Trees planted by the Water ſide*, Pſal. 1. 3. in a growing and thriving Situation, (as the Pſalmiſt elegantly deſcribes the condition of this Happy Man,) and where it muſt be your own intolerable fault, if like him, you bring not forth your *Fruit in due Seaſon*. Particularly you ought to Bleſs God for that Happy Inſtrument of theſe great Advantages, whoſe dear Memory we this Day *Juſtly*, and I hope *Gratefully* Celebrate.

And after a grateful Senſe, and hearty Acknowledgment of theſe kind Diſpenſations, your next care ſhould be to make ſuch good *uſe* and improvement of them all, as may anſwer both the natural tendency of the Priviledges themſelves, and the good Ends and Deſigns of *God* and your *Pious Founder*; always remembring, that if (as the Author to the *Hebrews* tells us, *Heb.* 2. 3.) they ſhall not eſcape who neglect the common Advantages of the Chriſtian Inſtitution, which was ſo much beyond whatever the World enjoyed before, much leſs ſhall we if we neglect *ſo great Salvation*, ſo great an Advantage and Opportunity of being Saved.

The Importance of a Religious Life considered from the happy Conclusion of it.

Psal. 37. 38. *Keep Innocency, and take heed to the thing that is right; for that shall bring a Man Peace at the Last.*

'TIS the great difference between a Life of Sin and Wickedness, and a Life of Piety and Vertue, that the former consults only the *present* Interest, but the latter provides for our *future* well-being, and lays a sure Foundation for our everlasting Peace and Happiness. The greatest advantage we can possibly promise our selves from a sinful course, can be at most but to be diverted a little, and pleasantly entertained for our term of Life here, which besides the uncertainty of it, is at longest very short and transitory: Short indeed, if compared to other temporary things in the Vegetable or Sensitive World, to the Life of an Oak or an Elephant; but a meer *nothing*, if ballanced with

with the Days of Eternity: Time it ſelf has no Proportion to Eternity, much leſs that Span of it that makes the Life of Man, *Pſal.* 39. *Behold thou haſt made my Days as a Span long, and mine Age is even as nothing in reſpect of thee*, ſays the Pſalmiſt; ſo that were our whole Life one continued and intire Scene of Pleaſure, nothing but meer Senſuality and Epicuriſm, 'twould be but juſt nothing in reſpect of that long part which we are to act upon another Stage. Indeed ſuch a degree of Pleaſantneſs would ſerve to make it yet much ſhorter, and contract the *Span* into a *Point*. And yet this is the moſt that a life of Sin can poſſibly pretend to, (for it lays claim to nothing beyond the Grave but Miſery and Deſtruction,) and when once the little Span is meaſured out, all that we can then ſay of it, upon a review, will be to the ſenſe of that ſevere Remark of the Stoick, Ἡ μὲν ἡδονὴ παρῆλθε, τὸ δὲ κακὸν μένει, *The Pleaſure truly is paſt and gone, but the Evil remains*; which is a moſt deplorable and afflicting Conſideration,

But I ſpeak this only upon *Suppoſition*; for indeed the Sinner is ſeldom or never ſo fortunate as this comes to; his whole life is but a Point, a little Speck between Time and Eternity, and yet 'tis not the thouſandth part of it that he enjoys. The more uſual method of Sin, is to mix and change the

Scenes, to regale us with a ſhort Entertainment, and then to ſerve up to us in the cloſe of the Feaſt a *Deaths Head*; to divert us a while with Pleaſure, and when that's over, to make us pay dearly for it; to afflict us with a ſharp and perhaps long Repentance. Indeed a bad Conſcience is a Companion troubleſom enough even in the midſt of the moſt high-ſet Enjoyments; 'tis then like the *Hand-writing* upon the Wall, enough to ſpoil and diſreliſh the *Feaſt*; but much more when the tumult and hurry of Delight is over, when all is ſtill and ſilent, when the Sinner has nothing to do, but attend to its laſhes and remorſes. And this in ſpite of all the common Arts of Diverſion, will be very often the caſe of every wicked Man; for we cannot live always upon the *Stretch*; our Faculties will not bear conſtant Pleaſure any more than conſtant Pain; there will be ſome *Vacancies*, and when there are, they will be ſure to be filled up with uncomfortable Thoughts and black Reflections: So that when the Accounts of a Sinful Life are caſt up, this will be found to be the Sum of it, a little preſent gratification at the expence of a deal of ſucceeding Trouble, Shame and Self-condemnation; nothing but preſent Joys and thoſe too frequently *interrupted*, and always *overcharged*. So that ſetting aſide the great *After-reckoning*, its Pleaſures

are

are over-bought even in this World, and there is this great Aggravation of the Folly of Sin, that altho ſome of its Pains are Eternal, yet all its Pleaſures are but for a Seaſon.

But now its quite otherwiſe in the practice of Religion and Vertue: This makes Proviſion for our Beſt and Laſt Intereſt, and ſecures to us a Reverſion of never Failing and never ending Happineſs. Indeed ſhe is not deſtitute even of a *Preſent* Reward, but carries in hand a ſufficient Recompence for all the trouble ſhe occaſions. She is pleaſant in the *Way* as well as in the *End*, for even her very Ways are Ways of Pleaſantneſs, and all her Paths are Peace. But 'tis her greateſt and moſt diſtinguiſhing Glory and Commendation, that ſhe befriends us *Hereafter*, and brings us Peace at the laſt. And this is a Portion ſhe can never be diſ-inherited of, however the Malice of Men, or an ill Combination of Accidents may defraud her of the Other. And therefore the Pſamiſt Overlooking as it were all the intermedial advantages of a good Life, recommends it only from that which is proper and peculiar to it. For Vice has its Preſent Pleaſures as well as Vertue; but herein are they diſcriminated, that 'tis Vertue only that ends well. I my ſelf (ſays the Pſalmiſt) have ſeen the ungodly in great Power, flouriſhing like a green

green Bay-Tree: There's the Present Pomp and Triumph of Sin. But I went by, and lo he was gone; I sought him, but his place could no where be found: There's the unhappy Close of the Merry Comedy. Then it follows as a Practical Remarque from the whole: Keep Innocency, and take heed to the thing that is Right, for that shall bring a Man Peace at the Last.

The Words are Naturally resolvable into these three Considerations, which shall be made the Subject of the following Discourse.

1. That Peace at the last is more to be valued than any of the Temporary Pleasures of Sin.

2. That a good life, which the Psalmist here expresses, by keeping Innocency, and taking heed to the thing that is right, will certainly bring a Man this Peace at the last.

3. That therefore it highly concerns every Man to keep Innocency, and to take heed to the thing that is Right; in one word, to *Live well.*

The Sum and Force of the whole may be reduced in this practical Syllogism.

That which will bring a Man peace at the last, is to be chiefly minded, and most diligently heeded.

But a Life of Piety and Vertue will bring a Man Peace at the Last.

Therefore a Life of Piety and Vertue is

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to be chiefly minded, and moſt diligently heeded.

I begin with the firſt Conſideration, That Peace at the laſt is more to be valued than any of the Temporary Pleaſures of Sin. Now this Term, *at the laſt*, may be taken Two ways, either for the laſt and concluding Period of a Man's Life in this World, and then Peace at the laſt will be all one with Peace at the Hour of Death; or elſe for the laſt and unchangeable State of Man in the other World, and then Peace at the laſt will be the ſame with *Everlaſting Peace*. I ſhall conſider the Propoſition with reſpect to both theſe Senſes: And Firſt, for Peace at the Hour of Death; The ineſtimable value of which, though none are ſo well able to judge of, as they who are really and actually concern'd in that dreadful moment, yet we may take ſome meaſures of it, by conſidering a little what it is to *Dye*, and how miſerable is the condition of thoſe who have lived ſo ill as to *want* this Peace at the Hour of Death.

And Firſt let us conſider (that which I fear we ſeldom do) what it is to *Dye*: Death is a thing of a ſtrange and dreadful conſideration, dreadful in *it ſelf*, as 'tis a Diſſolution of Nature, the manner of which, becauſe we do not *know*, we mightily *fear*; but much more ſo in its Iſſue and Conſequence, which

which is both *great* and *doubtful*, for upon this one thing more depends, than upon all the things in the World beſides. Indeed the loſs of Life and the Pains and Agonies wherewith it is loſt, are the leaſt part of Death. This indeed is the whole of it to brute and irrational Creatures, they ſuffer Pain for a while, then reſign up their Breath, and loſe both the Senſe and the Remembrance of both Pain and Pleaſure. But to the Dying *Man* Death appears in another Light, and with another Face: He is further to conſider, that he is juſt now launching out into the fathomleſs Deep of Eternity; that he is entring upon a new, ſtrange, dark, and withal unalterable ſtate of things; that he ſhall be within ſome few Minutes what at preſent he has no manner of Notion of, and what he muſt be for ever; that he is now about to throw his laſt and great Caſt, and to be reſolved once for all of his whole Condition; that he is now paſſing from Time to Eternity, Eternity of Happineſs, or Eternity of Miſery.

And what a dreadful moment then muſt that be, which a little precedes this great Tranſaction, when a Man ſtands upon the very *edge* and brink of the Precipice, juſt upon the turning off, and has the great Gulph of Eternity in view! Nothing certainly can be more dreadful than this, except

cept that very Point, that narrow Horizon that divides Time from Eternity, the end of the former, and the beginning of the latter, and actually determines the buſineſs of our Happineſs or Damnation.

And now ſince to Dye is no leſs a thing in its conſequence, than to be either Damned or Saved, to be either Eternally Happy, or Eternally Miſerable, it cannot ſure but be matter of vaſt importance to a Man, to conſider which of theſe two is like to be his Lot, when he is juſt about to try one of them. Nay indeed, 'twill then nearly concern him to be pretty well aſſured of the *welfare* of his After-ſtate; then if ever, he will rightly underſtand the ineſtimable Price of a quiet Conſcience, of a ſatisfied Mind, and of a Hope full of Glory and Immortality; then if ever, he will find that which was always a *Continual Feaſt*, is now a Sovereign Cordial and the Food of Angels; for never certainly is Peace and Comfort more ſeaſonable than at this inſtant; never ſo much need of it, and never ſo much value to be ſet upon it; never can it more avail us to be ſatisfied concerning our final condition, than when we are juſt entring upon it; never more refreſhing to have ſome few Beams of Light, than when we are paſſing through the *dark Valley* and *ſhadow* of *Death*. Then therefore, if ever, we ſhall duly valve this rich

rich Pearl, a good Conscience, and be well content if we had parted with all our Substance for the Purchase of it. We shall then be fully convinced (O why are we not so now!) how much it outweighs all the Temporary Pleasures of Sin, yea, and the Severities of Vertue too; and that if our whole Life had beed one continued act of Penance and Austerity, 'twould have been abundantly recompensed by the Satisfaction and Consolation of this one Moment. And that 'tis worth while to live Rigidly, if 'twere only upon this one Consideration, that we may dye Chearfully.

And without Question it must needs be an unspeakable Satisfaction to a Dying Man, when if he looks *backward*, he sees a Life well spent; if *forward*, he has before him a bright Prospect of Light and Glory: When he can say with King *Hezekiah*, *Remember now O Lord I beseech thee, how I have walked before thee in Truth and with a Perfect Heart*; Isa. 38. and with the great Apostle when within view of his Dissolution, 2 *Tim.* 4. *I have fought a good Fight, I have finished my Course, I have kept the Faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a Crown of Righteousness, which the Lord the Righteous Judge shall give me at that day.* I say it must needs be an unspeakable, an unconceivable Satisfaction, for a Man in his last Hour, when he is taking

ing leave of his Body, and ſhaking Hands with the whole World, when all are ſad about him, and concerned for him, then to conſider that there is a better ſtate, and that he has a Title to it; that when his Earthly Tabernacle ſhall be diſſolved, he has a Building with God, an Houſe not made with Hands, Eternal in the Heavens: That when he ſhall ceaſe to live with Men, he ſhall dwell with God, and converſe with Angels; in a word, that he is to leave nothing but Vanities and Shadows behind him, and that he has the ſolid and real Happineſs of a whole Eternity before him. What a mild and unterrifying thing is Death to ſuch a Man as this, and with what Serenity and Chearfulneſs does he entertain its Summons! He can ſmile in the Phyſicians Face, when he hears him pronounce his Sickneſs deſperate, can receive the Sentence of Death without Trembling, and if his Senſes hold out ſo long, can hear even his Paſſing-Bell without diſturbance. The Warnings of Death are no more to him, than was the Voice of God to *Moſes*, when he ſaid to him, *Get thee up to Mount* Nebo *and dye there*; Deut. 32. no more but get thee up and dye. For now he feels the approaches of that Salvation with Joy, which he had before wrought out with Fear and Trembling, and can lay down his Body with an holy Hope, having poſſeſ-

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ſed it in Sanctification and Honour. And what a happy ſtate of Mind is this! How far exceeding all the common objects of Deſire and Envy, and all thoſe Pleaſures of Sin, for whoſe ſake 'tis yet frequently put to the *Hazard*, and too often fooliſhly *exchanged*! To *Live* with Peace of Conſcience is a ſingular Happineſs, but much more to *Dye* with it; then, if ever, 'tis a Peace that paſſes all Underſtanding. So great reaſon had *Balaam* for that paſſionate Wiſh of his, *Let me dye the Death of the Righteous, and let my laſt End be like his.*

But this we ſhall be further convinc'd of, by conſidering Secondly, the miſerable condition of thoſe who want this Peace at the Hour of Death: This may be conceived in a double degree, either by way of *Doubt* or *Diſtruſt*, or by way of down-right *Deſpair*. Suppoſe we then in the Firſt place, a Man placed upon his Death-bed, who has led his Life ſo indifferently, or Repented ſo lately, or ſo imperfectly, that 'tis a matter of reaſonable queſtion, whether he has an intereſt in the Mercies of the New Covenant or no; what a ſtrange kind of *Suſpenſe* muſt ſuch a Man be in, and what a ſtrange concern muſt he have upon him! What a diſconſolate, what a *damping* Thought muſt it be for ſuch a Man to conſider that he is now going out of the World, but does not know whither!

That

That there are Two States of Eternity, but he does not know which ſhall fall to his lot; nor, when his Soul is diſlodged from his Body, who ſhall give her the firſt greeting, whether an *Angel* or the *Devil*. And how muſt ſuch an uncertain Soul tremble and be confounded in this her *dark* Paſſage! 'Tis a ſad thing even to be doubtful and Unreſolved in a buſineſs of ſuch vaſt moment.

But if the Man by reaſon of the notorious enormity of his Life, is ſo far a Stranger to this Peace, as to be in utter *Deſpair* of his Salvation, I want words to expreſs how miſerable then his Condition is; with what amazement then will he look, both backward and forward, upon his Sins, and upon his approaching Account, and how full of Indignation will he be againſt himſelf for neglecting, when he had ſo many Opportunities, to conſider the things that belonged to his Peace, and which now he perceives to be for ever hid from his Eyes! The *Memory* of a Sinful Life is always tormenting, whatever Pleaſure there may be in the *acts* of it, and the expectation of Judgment is always terrible; but never do either of them appear in their true Colours, till a Man comes to Dye: Then he begins to have a ſenſe and apprehenſion of them, ſomewhat like that which our Saviour had in the Garden, which put him into an *Agony*, and a *Sweat*

of *Blood*. When the Man comes within view of *Eternity*, then will he be most concerned for his misuse of *Time*. The Scripture compares a wicked Man to a *Troubled Sea*, always working and uneasie, but about the time of Death he is all over Storm and Tempest. Who can then *express* the hundredth part of the Disturbance and Confusion he then *feels*? For a Man to think he is just going to give an account before God of such a Life as he can't so much as reflect upon privately by himself without Shame and Amazement, and to be sentenced to a place of Torment, from whence there is no Redemption; to think that he has lived insignificantly and wickedly, idly and unaccountably, and neglected that only time of Probation, that only Opportunity of Happiness allowed him, an Opportunity which was procured him at no less a rate than the Death of his Saviour, and which was denyed to the Angels that Sinned: To think that he has negelcted so great Salvation, and that he must now be miserable and undone for ever, when with ease he might have been happy, and all this for the sake of some little trifling Interests or Pleasures, for Dreams and Shadows, for that which never was considerable, and now is not at all: What can be more afflicting, more astonishing than this? For my part I think the Misery on't so great, that I can't

can't ſee how any Man could ſupport himſelf under the Agony of ſuch a Conſideration, no, not though an Angel ſhould appear to him from Heaven, ſtrengthening him: For 'tis a ſtate of Mind full of the very *Blackneſs* of Darkneſs, and but one Remove from the Miſery of Damnation.

And now I think from this Deſcription of Horrour, it may with eaſe be gathered, what an invaluable Bleſſing and Happineſs it is to have Peace at the laſt, I mean at our laſt Hour. If there be any one that is not yet enough ſatisfied of it, let him but ask a Dying Man the Queſtion, and then remain an Infidel if he can.

I ſhould now conſider Peace at the laſt, as it ſignifies *Everlaſting Peace*, or the Peace of the laſt and unchangable ſtate of Man in the other World, and ſhew how far this is to be valued beyond all the Temporary Pleaſures of Sin: But this is that Peace of God which paſſes all Underſtaning, all Conception, and all Expreſſion, and between which and any thing of this World, there is no manner of Proportion. What the Apoſtle ſays of the *Sufferings*, is as true of the *Pleaſures* and Enjoyments of this preſent time, they are neither of them worthy to be compared with the Glory that ſhall be revealed: Not worthy to be compared for their *Greatneſs*, and leſs for their *Duration*. I may

therefore well omit any further inlarging upon this, 'twould be almost as ridiculous to go about to give Light to a thing that is of it self so clear, as 'tis to disbelieve it; and he that offers to make the least Question of so evident a Truth, is much too absurd to be seriously argued with.

I shall therefore pass on to the Second Consideration, that a good Life which the Psalmist here expresses, by keeping Innocency, and taking heed to the thing that is Right, will certainly bring a Man this Peace at the last. And First, 'twill bring him *Everlasting Peace*; this is plain from the whole tenour of the new Covenant, which establishes a standing and never failing connexion between *Repentance* and *Pardon*. 'Tis the very Purchase of Christ's Death, that now Repentance may be unto Life; and accordingly 'tis not only matter of Hope and probable Expectation, but 'tis made one of the *Articles* of our *Creed*, that we may obtain *Forgiveness of Sins*. Indeed, Repentance is now no where in vain, but among Devils and Damned Spirits; it would have been so with us too, had not Christ died, and satisfied the Curse of the Law, and the Justice of the Lawgiver, and upon that satisfaction erected a new Covenant. For the Law knows no such thing as Repentance, but the Soul that sinneth must Dye,

Penitent

Penitent or Impenitent. But 'tis the benefit we have by the ſatisfaction of Chriſt, that now if we repent, we ſhall be forgiven and accepted with God to Salvation and Happineſs. We ſhall certainly be ſaved with it, and not without it; for Chriſt did not (as ſome fancy,) ſo far undertake for us, that we might not Repent and live well, but that we might Repent to *Purpoſe*. He did not deſign to make our Repentance unneceſſary, but only to render it uſeful and efficacious to the ends of Pardon and Reconciliation: So that a good Life is not only the means, but the *only* poſſible means to everlaſting Peace and Happineſs.

As it is Secondly, to bring us Peace at the Hour of Death, nothing elſe can do it but this, and this can, and moſt certainly will; as a good life gives us a firm Title to Salvation and Happineſs, ſo will it give us a good comfortable Aſſurance of that Title which is always an unſpeakable Peace and Satisfaction, but eſpecially at the approach of Death. And this is the natural Conſequence and Reward of a Life well ſpent; a good Man *does* his Duty with great Pleaſure and Satisfaction, but he *reflects* upon it with greater; his *Preſent* Joys are very ſavoury and refreſhing, but his *After-Comforts* are much more ſo. But of all the Reviews of his Life, none yeilds him ſo much Comfort

and Satisfaction, as that last general Review which he takes of it, when he comes to Dye; then he has most need of Comfort, then he is most fit to relish it, and then he has most of it. With what strange Delight and Satisfaction does he then reflect upon his past Life, and call to mind the good he has done in it! Those Joys and Consolations which before maintained a gentle course within their own Channels, now begin to swell above their Banks and *overflow* the Man. A kind of Heavenly Light springs up in his Mind, and shines forth into his Face, and his Hopes and his Desires, his Thoughts and his Affections, his Presages and his Expectations, his Body and his Soul; yea, the whole Man is full of Glory and Immortality; he is conscious to himself of his Sincerity and Integrity, that he has not been wilfully and deliberately wanting in any part of his Duty, but has rather made this his *Exercise* and constant concern, to keep a Conscience void of Offence towards God and towards Man. And as he *recollects* this with *Pleasure*, so he builds upon it with *Confidence*, and accordingly resigns up his Soul into his Maker's Hands, chearfully and couragiously, nothing doubting, but that that good God whom he has so faithfully served in his Life, will take care of him, and reward him after Death.

And

And for ſuch an Aſſurance as this, there is ſufficient ground in Scripture: *Pſal.* 119. *Great is the Peace that they have who love thy Law*, ſays the Pſalmiſt: *And the Righteous hath Hope in his Death*, ſays *Solomon*, *Prov.* 14.32. And ſays the Prophet, *Iſa.* 32.17. *The work of Righteouſneſs ſhall be Peace, and the effect of Righteouſneſs Quietneſs and Aſſurance for ever.* And ſays the great Apoſtle, 2 *Cor.* 1. 12. *Our Rejoycing is this, the Teſtimony of our Conſcience, that in Simplicity and Godly Sincerity, we have had our Converſation in the World.* John 3. 14. *And we know that we have paſſed from Death to Life, becauſe we love the Brethren*, ſays Saint *John*. And again, *ver.* 21. *If our Hearts condemn us not, then have we Confidence towards God.*

There is indeed ſome Controverſy between the *Reformed* and the *Romiſh* Doctors concerning this Matter, the latter generally denying that a Man may be Aſſured or Certain of his Salvation; now though it may and perhaps muſt be granted, that we cannot have an Aſſurance of *Divine Faith*, (nothing being the Object of ſuch an Aſſurance, but for which we have an immediate Revelation from God, which cannot ordinarily be ſaid of any Man's Salvation in particular, but only of the general and conditional Propoſition of the Covenant upon

which we build,) yet I think there is sufficient reason to conclude from the forementioned places of Scripture, with many others too numerous and obvious to alledg, that a Man upon the consideration of his past life, may be so *Morally* assured of his Salvation, as to be out of all reasonable Doubt or Irresolution about it; and he that will deny this, must oblige himself to maintain one of these Two Propositions, either that a Man cannot understand what conditions are required of him in order to a Salvable State, or that he can't with any measure of Certainty, judge of himself whether he be qualified according to those Conditions. The former of which, would reflect upon the *Sufficiency* and *Clearness* of Scripture, which must be allowed to be full and plain in necessary things; and the latter would redound too much to the dishonour and disparagement of Human Reason and Understanding; since according to this Proposition a Man must be supposed to be so great a Stranger to himself, as not to know what passes within his own Breast, contrary to which the Scripture supposes in that Question, 1 *Cor.* 2. 11. *Who knows the things of a Man, save the Spirit of Man which is in him?*

It must be acknowledged, that this is not a strict Certainty, neither of *Science* nor of *Divine Faith*, but only a Moral and Human Assurance;

Assurance; for 'tis certain, that the Conclusion can be no stronger than the Premises: And therefore since one of the Propositions (that which contains my own Qualifications,) is matter only of Experimental Knowledg, which is a Human, and therefore fallible Testimony, 'tis certain, that the Assurance that rises from the whole, can be no more than an Human or Moral Assurance. But that is enough, and he is neither Reasonable nor Modest that either *Desires* or *Pretends* to more; since the other is sufficient for a *Satisfactory*, though not for an *Infallible* Judgment.

And yet there is something further in this matter yet; for to this Moral Assurance grounded upon the general Terms of Salvation, (which are matter of Divine Faith,) and upon the inward Conscioulness of our being qualified accordingly, (which is matter of Experimental Knowledge,) we may further add, that *Obsignation* so often mentioned in Scripture, *Rom.* 8. 16. whereby the Spirit it selfis said to bear Witness with our Spirit, that we are the Children of God; not by a clear and express Revelation, (for then the Assurance we have of our Salvation, would be an Assurance of Divine Faith, which is against what was before supposed,) but only by a secret Determination of our Minds to assent to this Comfortable Conclusion,

sion, that we are in a state of Pardon and Salvation, and by Confirming us in that Assent. After what manner this Operation of God is performed, I shall not be so curious as to inquire, 'tis enough to know that it is a certain impression of the Holy Spirit upon our Souls, whereby we are inwardly perswaded beyond the force of Rational Conviction of our being interessed in the Divine Favour, and in the Glory that shall be revealed. This is the *Seal* of the *Spirit*, Ephes. 1. 13, 14. and the *Pledge* or *Earnest* of our *Inheritance*, which God often bestows upon the Children of Light in this Life, as a Reward for their past, and sometimes as an incouragement for their future Obedience. For so says the Spirit to the Churches, *Rev.* 2. 71. *To him that overcometh, will I give to eat of the hidden Manna, and I will give him a white Stone, and in the Stone a new Name written, which no Man knows, saving he that receives it.*

And now since Peace at the last is so valuable a Treasure, and since a good life is a certain and the only way to obtain it, what Consequence can be more natural and evident from these Premises than that it highly concerns us to keep Innocency, and to take heed to the thing that is right; in one word, to live well, which was the Third and last Consideration. Indeed were Peace at the last, a thing of no great value, or were not

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a good Life a ſure and a neceſſary method to obtain it; were there a failure in either of theſe Premiſes, the Concluſion would fail with it, and 'twere no great matter how we Lived. But ſince the quite contrary appears to be unqueſtionably true, that Peace at the laſt is incomparably beyond any Temporal Intereſt we can propoſe, and a good Life is a ſure and neceſſary way to procure it; nothing certainly in the World can be of ſuch moment and conſequence, as to live well: 'Tis by infinite degrees the moſt important thing that can poſſibly imploy our Thoughts, or our Time, our Studies or our Endeavours, nay indeed 'tis the *One thing needful.* Vain and impertinent are all thoſe other *many things* we are here troubled about, all thoſe Thoughts and Cares we have about Time, and the things of Time, which indeed would be of little value, even to a Temporary Being, much more to an Immortal Spirit who is to live in another State, and there either enjoy or ſuffer to all Eternity. To ſuch a Being Time certainly can be no further conſiderable, than as Eternity depends upon it, no further than as it may ſerve as an Opportunity to ſecure the other; which is all the *uſe* and all the *value* Time and this Mortal Life can have with a wiſe and conſidering Man. The beſt uſe therefore we can make of our Time, is to live well in it,

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to spend it Innocently and Usefully, Piously and Charitably in the Service of God, and in doing good to Men. 'Tis for this we have our Time, and this is the right and proper use of it, and that which will give the most Happy Conclusion to it. This is that which will yield us Peace and Comfort, when nothing else can, and when we stand in most need of it, in the *Hour of Death*, and in the *Day of Judgment*, in either of which there is no comfort like a good Conscience.

When I shall lie faint and languishing upon my Dying Bed, with my Friends all sad about me, and my Blood and Spirits waxing cold and slow within; when I begin to reckon my Life not by the Striking of the Clock, but by the throbbings of my Pulse, every stroak of which beats a *Surrender* to the Pale Conqueror, in this great *Ebb* of Nature, when the Stream of Life runs low, *Eccles.* 12. 6. and the Wheel at the *Cistern* can hardly turn round its Circle, it will be then no Pleasure or Comfort to my departing Soul to reflect upon the great Estate that I have got, upon the Family and Name that I have raised, or upon the Honours and Preferments that I have gone through; No, my *Soul* will then have a new Taste as well as my *Body*, and these things will be as insipid to me as my *Meat* and *Drink*; only the Conscience of having done well, will then refresh

freſh me, and yield me Peace and Conſolation. This is that *Angel* that muſt ſupport and ſtrengthen me in that great and laſt *Agony*; nothing elſe is able to interpoſe for my relief, in that dreadful juncture, and this alone will be a ſufficient Comforter and Aſſiſtant. Many things there are that divert and ingage our Thoughts in the *Courſe* of our *Life*, but at the *end* of it, there is nothing that will be regarded by us, or afford us any Satisfaction but a good Conſcience. 2 *Cor.* 1. 12. Our rejoycing then will be this, the Teſtimony of our Conſcience, that in Simplicity and Godly Sincerity, we have had our Converſation in the World. And how infinitely then are we concerned to take heed to our ways to walk circumſpectly, and heartily to apply our ſelves to that *now*, which will ſtand us in ſuch ſtead *then!*

Beſides, 'tis our greateſt Wiſdom as well as Intereſt, and the beſt Proof we can give of our being Rational Creatures: We think it a great Commendation of our Reaſon to be able to Diſpute well, and Diſcourſe well, and we are generally more impatient of what reflects upon our *Intellectuals*, than of what reflects upon our *Morals*. But certainly to live well, is the greateſt argument of Wiſdom, and that which reflects upon our Morals, reflects moſt of all upon our Underſtandings. We live now in an Age wherein

wherein Craft and Worldly Policy, nay, and even down-right Knavery has usurped the name of Wisdom, and a Man is in danger of bringing his Parts in question, by adhering to his Duty against his Worldly Interest: But this is the Wisdom of Fools and Mad-men, of those who either think not at all, or else consider things by halves; 'tis in short the Wisdom of this World, which the Apostle tells us is Foolishness with God. But there is another Wisdom, and that is the *Wisdom of the Just*; and this is that Wisdom which God commends, and which we our selves shall hereafter (when best able to judge,) commend too; for this is that Wisdom from above, which is first *Pure*, then *Peaceable*, Jam. 3. 17. which will bring us Peace at the last, and whereby we shall become Wise unto Salvation.

The Conclusion of all is, Time it self is short, the Time of Man is much shorter; Eternity has neither end nor change, and every Man is hastening to this Eternal and Unchangeable State; and therefore it infinitely concerns us all so to live while we sojourn in this World, that when we come to dye, we may have these Two things to support us in that dreadful Hour, the Reflection upon the Innocency of our Life past, and the Prospect of future Glory and Happiness.

Which God of his Goodness grant us all, *&c.*

A Discourse concerning Heavenly-Mindedness.

Phil. 3. 20. *For our Conversation is in Heaven.*

THat Man is deeply lapsed and degenerated from a state of Excellency and Perfection, is evident from the Ruins of his Nature, which is now too faulty and defective to be the first and original workmanship of God; but in nothing is his Fall more signalized, than in that abject, servile and groveling disposition of Mind he now labours under: He has suffered indeed in all his Faculties, and every *String* of his Soul is put out of *Tune*; his Understanding has a Cloud dwelling upon it, his Will has lost much of its Verticity or Magnetick Inclination towards the chief Good; but that wherein he is most diminished, and stands most alienated from the *Life* of *God*; and the order of Grace, is the *Passionate* part of him, his Affections; these have suffered such a vast *Declination* from their true and natural

ral Point, and are ſo depreſſed into the dregs of the Material World, and are now become ſo unperceptive of any thing but the guſts and reliſhes of the Animal Nature, that inſtead of ſerving (as they were originally intended,) to the invigoration and actuation of the Soul, they are her greateſt clog and impediment in all her Endeavours and Aſpirations after the Divine Life.

This is that ſo much Celebrated πτερόρυσις of the Platoniſts, the *Moulting of the Plumes* of the Soul; ſhe is not only broken and wounded in her Wings, but utterly *unpinioned*, ſhe has dropt her Feathers, and can no longer ſuſtain her weight in the higher Regions, but falls down, and lies groveling upon the Ground; as if beſides the Primitive Curſe upon Man, of Tilling the Earth from whence he was taken, he had inherited that of the Serpent too, *Upon thy Belly ſhalt thou go, and Duſt ſhalt thou eat all the days of thy Life.*

And as this Demiſſion of Soul is the moſt ſignal inſtance of the Degeneracy of Man, ſo is it commonly the laſt from whence we recover; our Affections are the moſt ſtubborn and unconquerable part about us, as being blind and unperceptive Appetites, and ſuch as are ſet at the greateſt diſtance from the *Light* of the Mind, which ſhines firſt upon the Will, and then upon the Paſſions, whoſe

whoſe illumination is therefore more feeble and languid. Hence it comes to paſs, that this is the moſt difficult part to be managed, as there is more trouble with One Fool, than with Ten Wiſe Men: and when the Underſtanding and Will are reſigned up, and given over to the importunity of him that ſtands at the Door and knocks, theſe ſtill maintain the Fort againſt the Heavenly Battery, and are very often too ſucceſsful in their reſiſtance. Indeed the regulation of the *Pathetic* part is commonly the laſt conqueſt of Divine Grace, the conſummating degree of Spiritual Life, the cloſing feature of that Image of God which is form'd in us; for nothing is more common than to ſee Men of ſingular Strictneſs and vertuous Converſation in all other reſpects, who yet have their Affections deeply ingaged in Secular Intereſts, who ſtoop and yield to the Magnetiſm of this dirty Planet, and (as the Apoſtle phraſes it in the Verſe before the Text,) *Mind* or reliſh *Earthly things*: An Eminent Example of this we have in the Story of the Young Man, who came to our Saviour to inquire what he ſhould do to inherit Eternal Life; who though a diligent Obſerver of the Law, and generally accompliſhed with moral Qualifications, inſomuch that our Lord began to have a kindneſs for him, yet the *affectionate* part of his Soul had ſtill a wrong Bias,

and was not sufficiently weaned from Earthly good; *One thing thou lackest*, and what was that? not more Justice, nor more Charity, nor more Temperance, but to have his Affections more loose and disingaged from the World; for when he was bid go and Sell what he had and give it to the Poor, he was sad at that Saying, and went away grieved, though he was told at the same time, that it was to be only an *Exchange*, and that far for the better, that he should have Treasure in *Heaven*, Mark 10. 21. for what he quitted upon *Earth*.

But however difficult it may be for a Soul so low sunk in her Affections, to recover again upon the Wing, and bear up above the steams of the Flesh, and the attractions of the Animal Nature, yet this is that excellent end which the Christian Institution aims at, and which every good Christian ought diligently to endeavour after: For what the Author of our Faith and Happiness said of some particular Words of his, is true of all, that they are Spirit and Life, such as are able, and were designed to reanimate the dead and senseless Minds of Men, and to diffuse a vital heat throughout the torpid and benumm'd World. And accordingly St. *Paul* tell us, That Christianity is νόμος τοῦ πνεύματος τῆς ζωῆς, *the Law of the Spirit of Life*, and in another place, διακονία τοῦ πνεύματος,

πνεύματος, *The Ministration of the Spirit*, 2 Cor. 3. such as becomes a Vital Form in us, to give us Motion and Activity, and to raise us from that Sown and Lethargy, which by our Fall we were cast into. And the same Apostle makes it here the Character of an accomplished Christian, such who is fit to be proposed as an Example for our Imitation, that he is one that is not only above, but has nothing to do with the petty, trifling Interests of this lower World, but has his Thoughts and Affections wholly taken up and imployed about the Beatitudes of the next. For says he, *Brethren, be Followers together of me, and mark them that walk so as ye have us for an Example; for our Conversation is in Heaven.* In discoursing upon which Words, I shall shew.

First, What is it to have our Conversation in Heaven.

Secondly, How reasonable and becoming it is for a Christan to do so

Thirdly, What are the Uses and Advantages of such an heavenly Dispensation of Life.

Now concerning the First, I consider that *Heaven* here may be understood either largely for the state of the other Life in general, by way of opposition to this, or more strictly for that special and excellent Portion of it, Glory and Happiness. If we consider

it according to the former ſenſe, then to have our Converſation in Heaven, will be to be perpetually mindful of our Mortality, and that we are Citizens of another World, and muſt ſhortly take our leave of this; to have a conſtant proſpect into that other World which muſt be our laſt Home, and to be always looking beyond the Horizon of Time, to the Long Day of Eternity, to dwell in the Meditation of the Four laſt things, Heaven, Hell, Death and Judgment; how great they are in their Conſequence, how certain in the Event, and how near in their Approach, and in conſideration of all this, to be always preparing for our great and final Change.

But if we conſider it according to the latter and ſtricter Senſe, then to have our Converſation in Heaven, will be frequently to contemplate the Infinite Perfections of the Divine Eſſence, the *Firſt* of *Beings*, and the *Laſt* of *Ends*, and the unconceivable Happineſs of thoſe who ſhall enjoy the Communications of his Bleſſedneſs; to Contemplate, and have always in view that weight of Glory, that incorruptible Crown with which the Sufferings of this preſent time are not worthy to be compared, no not to be mentioned. To meditate day and night upon that happy time, when we ſhall be Partakers of *Moſes's* Wiſh, and be admitted to that intimate

timate and naked Viſion of that Myſterious and Incomprehenſible Excellence, which is too great for our Mortal Faculties, and which none can *See* and *Live*: Exod. 33. 20. When we ſhall ſee him not in Symbols and Figures, not in Glories and ſenſible Manifeſtations, but openly and clearly, really and as he is, and from ſeeing him, be transformed into his likeneſs: 1 *Joh.* 3. 2. To meditate upon the bleſſed Society of Saints and Angels, upon the delicious repaſts of Anthems and Allelujahs, and that more raviſhing Harmony of Divine Love, and intellectual Sympathy; upon the elevated and raiſed Perfections of a glorified Soul, the inlargements of its Underſtanding, and the Sublimations of its Will and Affections, and upon the Angelical Clarity and Divine Temper of our Reſurrection Body: In ſum, upon all thoſe glorious things which are ſpoken, and which even he that ſaw them could not *utter*, of the City of God, and upon the infinite Conſolations of that joyful Sentence, *Come ye Bleſſed of my Father, Inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the beginning of the World*, 2 Cor. 12. 4. Laſtly to contemplate all this not coldly and indifferently as a thing that is a great way off, or as an uncertain Reverſion or imaginary *Utopia*, but as a ſtate that will ſhortly and certainly be, and with that Faith and Aſſu-

rance which is the ſubſtance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not ſeen; to Dwell, Converſe, and have our *Civil* Life in Heaven, (for ſo the word πολίτευμα ſignifies,) as if we were already Inhabitants of that Bleſſed Place, and actual Members of that Sacred Policy and Community.

This is to have our Converſation in Heaven, this is that *Heavenly-Mindedneſs* which the great Apoſtle who had perſonally converſed in the Third Heaven, and ſeen there more than he could utter, propoſes to the Imitation of his Followers, and for which he eſteemed himſelf fit to be an Example: Which leads me to ſhew Secondly, what a reaſonable and becoming thing it is for a Chriſtian thus to have his Converſation in Heaven; and to convince him that it is ſo, let him conſider,

First, That the other Life is the ſtate we are chiefly intended for, without reſpect to which there is nothing in this conſiderable enough to juſtify the Wiſdom and Goodneſs of God in making the World; that here we have no abiding City, no durable concern, and conſequently what a Folly 'tis to let our Thoughts *dwell* where we but *Sojourn* our ſelves; that this preſent ſtate both by reaſon of its ſhortneſs and other Vanities, is upon no other account conſiderable, than as 'tis an opportunity for, and a Paſſage to the next;

next; that as it was not worth while for God to make it, so neither is it for us to live in it, if it were not in order and relation to something further; that it is a short Voyage, and where the Haven lies always in sight; that 'tis the greatest short-sightedness imaginable, not to see beyond so little a prospect as the Grave, and the greatest stupidity and dotage, to confine our Cares and Affections on this side of it, if we do: 'Tis true indeed if there were no other state but the present, 'twould be our greatest Prudence to make as much of it as we could, though 'twere more vain and contemptible than 'tis, because 'tis our All; 'twould then be as reasonable to have our Conversation on *Earth*, as now 'tis to have it in *Heaven*, and the *Epicure*'s Proverb would then be as Wise as any of *Solomon's*, *Let us Eat and Drink, for to Morrow we Dye.* But since we are assured by him who brought Life and Immortality to light through the Gospel, that there is another state, and that our Death is but the beginning of a new and never to be ended Life, this one would think should deserve and engross all our Thoughts and Affections, our Meditations and Discourses, and that we should be no more concerned with the things of this World, that a *Ghost* is, that only comes to do a Message of Providence, and when his Errand is over, vanishes and disappears. Or

if we did at any time condeſcend to intereſt our ſelves in the Affairs or lawful Entertainments of this Life, methinks it ſhould be only tranſiently and by the by, as the Hungry Diſciples pluck'd the Ears of Corn, juſt to ſerve a preſent Neceſſity, or as the *Iſraelites* ate the Paſſover in haſte, with our Loins girt, our Shoes on our Feet, and our Staff in our hand, *Exod.* 12.

Secondly, Let him conſider that as the other ſtate is the chief and proper ſtate of Man, ſo Heaven is the good and happineſs of that ſtate, that 'tis the true natural Centre of our Reſt, our Home and Native Region; that the Joys there are unſpeakable and full of Glory, ſuch as the Senſes of Man cannot taſte, ſuch as his Underſtanding cannot at preſent conceive, and ſuch as it will never be able to comprehend; Joys that are without example, above experience, and beyond imagination, for which the whole Creation wants a Compariſon, we an Apprehenſion, and even the Word of God a Revelation. That *Eternal Word* of God, which opened to us a Proſpect of a future ſtate, and brought Life and Immortality to light; yet he attempted not to give us a repreſentation of the Heavenly Felicity, but thought fit rather to caſt that unexpreſſible Scene of Glory into a *Shade*. For indeed to what purpoſe ſhould the Son of God go about

about to reveal the Secrets of the Kingdom to us, ſince if it were poſſible to deſcribe it as it *is*, yet 'tis not poſſible for us to conceive it as it is *deſcribed*, but we muſt Dye and be Partakers of it, before we can either *underſtand* it or *indure* it; this therefore would be a Revelation without a Diſcovery, a Revelation which he himſelf only could underſtand, another *Sealed Book* which none but himſelf would be able to open. Since then Heaven is a Place of ſuch tranſcendent Glory and Happineſs, as our preſent Faculties are not fine enough to *convince*, nor ſtrong enough to *bear*, what can be more reaſonable and becoming, than that we who are now journying in the Wilderneſs towards this our Heavenly *Canaan*, where is our Portion and our Inheritance, ſhould have our conſtant Converſation there by holy Contemplations and devout Affections, that ſo according to our Saviour's Argument, where our Treaſure is, there our Heart may be alſo? For what can be either a more noble or a more concerning Object for an Human Soul to Contemplate, than its laſt end and ſovereign Happineſs; when all its Changes and Revolutions ſhall ceaſe, all its Appetites be ſatisfied, and nothing further to be expected but a moſt delightſome continuation of the ſame endleſs circle of Felicity? Certainly one would think, that what will ſo wholly take up

up and ingage the Soul when she comes to enjoy it, should be thought worthy to employ her best Thoughts now, as undoubtedly it would, did we firmly and heartily believe it. And therefore,

Thirdly, Consider that we have no other way of approving the sincerity and heartiness of our Faith, concerning Heaven and Happiness, but by having our Conversation there; for so great and glorious things are spoken of the City of God, that 'tis not morally possible that a Man should be heartily perswaded of the truth of them, and yet not to have the main current of his Thoughts and Affections run in that Chanel: How is it possible that a Man should believe such great things, and yet not have his Thoughts dwell upon them? Some things indeed may be very little questioned, and yet as little thought of, because their *Moment* and Importance carries no proportion to their *Truth*; they are not *Realities*, but *Trifles*. But sure the things we now speak of, are too concerning, if true, not to be frequently and seriously considered: If once we are thoroughly perswaded of their Truth and Reality, their own concernment and importance will be enough to recommend them to our most inward and recollected Thoughts and Meditations; and therefore for my part when I see Men plunge themselves into the depths

depths of Senſuality and Worldly Intereſts, as if they never meant to riſe again, to love the World as they are commanded to love God, withall their Heart, Mind, Soul and Strength, to have no ſerious Thoughts and Remembrances of Heaven or Heavenly things, but to ſet up their Tabernacles, and ſay, 'tis *good to be here*, I muſt conclude, (and they may think me uncharitable if they pleaſe,) that whatever they pretend, they do not heartily and ſeriouſly believe there is any ſuch place as Heaven; for if they did, conſidering the vaſt importance of the thing, it would certainly have a greater ſhare of their Contemplations, and a larger room in their Hearts. And this very thing our Savour intimates in his Reprehenſion of the immoderate Cares for the World; *Theſe things*, ſays he, *the Gentiles ſeek*, thoſe who have no revelation to aſſure them of a better and more induring Subſtance: Having no certainty of the future, they make moſt of the preſent, and in ſo doing, act in ſome meaſure according their Principles. *But ſeek ye firſt the Kingdom of God*; Mat. 6. 32, 33. ye that have a Revelation of a nobler end, and of a far more excellent ſtate, do you apply your ſelves principally to that, or elſe you will not act like your ſelves, and may juſtly be ſuſpected of not *Believing* that Revelation which the others *want*.

Fourthly,

Fourthly, Consider that as the having our Conversation in Heaven, is an argument and test of our *Faith*, so is it also of our *Resurrection* with Christ, and our Spiritual Life; the Connexion is made by the Apostle, *If ye be then risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the Right Hand of God; set your Affections on things above, and not on things of the Earth; for ye are Dead, &c.* Col. 3. 1. In which Discourse 'tis evident, that the Apostle does not only exhort to Heavenly-Mindedness as a Christian Duty, but makes it also a certain Mark and Argument of Spiritual Life and Resurrection. The Marks and Signs of Grace have made a great part of some Mens Divinity, and they are generally such as do not want for Latitude and Comprehensiveness; to be sure they contrived their business, so as to take in themselves and their own Party. But certainly there is not a more notorious Criterion whereby to distinguish the prevalency either of the Animal or of the Divine Life, than to consider how the Moral *Taste* and *Relish*, that which the Platonists call Ἀγαθοειδὲς, the *Boniform faculty* of the Soul stands affected. 'Tis a Shrewd Symptom of an ill habit of Body when the *Taste* comes to be so vitiated, as to delight to feed upon Trash and unwholsom things; and so 'tis in the state of the Mind, the Animal

nimal and Senſualized Man, as he does not *Perceive*, ſo neither does he *Reliſh* the things of God; they have no congruity with that Life and Senſe that is moſt invigorated and awaken'd in him, and therefore he prefers his Husks and Acorns before the hidden Manna, and the Food of Angels. But he who is born of that incorruptible Seed mentioned by St. *Peter*, 1 Pet. 1. 23. and in whom the Divine Life is moſt excited, he having his Spiritual Senſes well diſpoſed and exerciſed, finds a particular guſt in Divine things, contracts his Affections upon Heaven and Happineſs, looks upon all inferiour good as dry and inſipid, and is ready to ſay with the Pſalmiſt, *One thing have I deſired of the Lord, even that I may dwell in the Houſe of the Lord all the days of my Life, to behold the fair Beauty of the Lord, and to viſit his Temple*, Pſal. 27. This is the Deſire, that is the Reliſh of a Spiritually diſpoſed Soul, of a Soul that is dead to the World, and alive unto God; the Sum of all which is briefly comprized in that of the Apoſtle, *They that are after the Fleſh do mind*, or (as the Word alſo ſignifies,) do reliſh *the things of the Fleſh, and they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit*. This is a ſhort and compendious, but a very great Teſt of Spiritual Life, and that whereby we may diſtinguiſh a vital Senſe of Religion from a formal Profeſſion of it.

Fifthly

Fifthly and Lastly, Consider that one great end of our Saviour's Ascending into Heaven in his Human Nature was, that we Christians might have our Conversation there; in order to which end, the Ascension of Christ has a double Influence, First as a Rational Motive, and Secondly as a Moral Emblem.

First as a *Rational Motive*, for since the Ascension of our Saviour into Heaven adds new Supplements of support to our Hopes of arriving thither (his Ascension being a Pledge and Pattern of ours,) it must needs at the same time fan the Flame of our Affections, and make them tend upwards with importunate reaches towards Heavenly Objects. For this is a Maxim which *Experience* as well as *Philosophy* has stamped for truth, that the more our Hope of any good is established, the more our Desires after it are increased, and that nothing sooner cools the Fever of the Affections, than Despair of Fruition; Whence it follows, that the Ascension of Christ by adding further incouragement to our Hopes, becomes a Rational Motive to us to refine and elevate our Affections, and to have our Conversation in that Heaven of our Interest in which the Ascension of Christ in our Nature is so convincing an Assurance.

Secondly, As a *Moral Emblem*; the whole course

courſe of our Saviour's Actions tends to our inſtruction and admoniſhment; and though ſome of them were never intended to be copied out in kind, as being ſet above the Sphere of our imitation, yet they are not ſo far out of our reach, but that they point out to us ſome *reſembling* Excellence, and may be imitated though not *literally*, yet in *Figure* and Myſtery. Of this kind are the Reſurrection and Aſcenſion of our Lord; for although with him we cannot as yet looſen the bands of Death, and break the Priſon of the Grave, yet we can now in ſome ſenſe riſe with him, from the Death of Sin, to newneſs of Life, and are by his Reſurrection not only *inabled*, but alſo *admoniſhed* to do ſo. And altho as to his Bodily Aſcenſion, (as our Lord told St. *Peter*,) we cannot follow him now, yet we can in ſome ſenſe aſcend with him, by a paſſionate elevation of our Thoughts and Affections, and are alſo myſtically invited to do the latter from the Contemplation of the former. The Local and Bodily Aſcenſion of Chriſt, calls for a Moral and Spiritual Aſcent; *John* 12. 32. *If I be lifted up from the Earth, I will draw all Men unto me*, ſaid our Lord in reference to his Crucifixion. How much more powerful then ought this Conſideration to be in reference to his *Aſcenſion*; for it cannot be ſaid of him now, what was then, when his Beauty

Beauty was benighted under a Cloud, that there is no Form nor Comelineſs in him, that we ſhould deſire him; for now are the Miſts ſcattered before the prevailing Sun, he ſhines forth in his full Glory and Triumph, yea, he is now altogether Lovely. Now therefore may the Pious and Seraphick Soul bear up her ſelf upon the Wings of Contemplation, Love and Deſire, and follow her Aſcending Lord where the Eyes of the wondring Apoſtles were forced to leave him, and ſay in the Words of *Eliſha* to his departing Maſter, *as the Lord liveth, and as thy Soul liveth I will not leave thee*; 2 Kin. 2. 2. and bleſſed is he that hath part in this firſt Aſcenſion, for over him the Second Death ſhall have no Power.

And thus have I ſhewn by ſeveral Conſiderations, what a reaſonable and becoming thing it is for a Chriſtian to have his Converſation in Heaven; but it will appear yet much more ſo, if we conſider in the Third and Laſt place the great Uſes and Advantages of ſuch a Heavenly diſpenſation of Life, and they are many; but I ſhall conſider only ſome of the moſt remarkable of them.

Firſt, This is a moſt excellent expedient to beget and confirm in us the contempt of the World, and of all thoſe Pomps and Vanities of it which we renounced in our Baptiſm; this is a mighty thing, and a thing that has been

been eſſayed by ſeveral methods, as by Monaſtick Ingagements, by retiring into Cloiſters and Deſerts, by Vows of Poverty and the like: But theſe are rather Natural than Moral Ways of forſaking the World; and 'tis conſiderable that our Saviour in his laſt Interceſſion for his Diſciples, prays not that they ſhould be taken out of the World, but delivered from the evil of it, *John* 17. 15. The beſt way to forſake the World, is to do it in Heart and Affection, and the moſt effectual means to do this, is by converſing in the other World. This indeed may be done by a ſerious Contemplation of the powers of *external* Nature, and of the capacities of our *own*, by comparing which two together, we may be ſatisfied of the Vanity and inſufficiency of all Worldly Objects to the purpoſes of Content and Happineſs. And this was the courſe that *Solomon* took to convince himſelf and others of the World's Vanity. But beſides that this is a long way about, and a way that requires a great deal of Time, and a great deal of Experience, and a great deal of Meditation and Reflection; it is alſo a Method fit only for finer and more elevated Spirits, thoſe of a Contemplative Genius, and of a Nice Diſcernment. But to Converſe in Heaven, is a more compendious and eaſy Method to contemn the lower World, more practicable to the common ſort; and thoſe

that cannot do the other way. *Dispute* and *Demonstrate*, may however in this be *sensibly* convinced of the Vanity of the World. The Earth to us that dwell upon it, seems a Body of considerable Magnitude, but to one that should take a view of it from one of the higher Orbs, 'twould appear but as a *Point*. The same indeed might be demonstrated upon *Mathematic* Principles, but every one is not capable of doing that, and such an high raisd prospect would save the trouble. And so 'tis in the case before us; this World considered alone may perhaps carry with it a specious and goodly Appearance, and he that does so consider it, will need Reason and Argument to convince him of its Vanity; but 'tis but to converse a little in the other World, and take a view of from thence, and 'twill all without any more ado shrink almost into nothing. And therefore 'twas not without reason that the Divine Philosopher stiled Philosophy *the Theory of Death*; for certainly the Contemplation of the other state, is the most compendious way to true Philosophy, the Contempt of the World far beyond all the ways of Reason or Discourse, all the rigid and mortifying lectures of *Stoicism*. And accordingly I observe that the Author to the *Hebrews* says of *Abraham*, Heb. 11. 9. that *by Faith he Sojourned in the Land of Promise as in a strange Country, dwelling*

ling in Tabernacles; And the reaſon of his doing ſo more expreſly follows, *for he look'd for a City which has Foundations, whoſe Builder and Maker is God*; ſo that this was that which drew off *Abraham*'s Affections from the Land of Promiſe, becauſe by Faith he had a Proſpect of a far better Country, and had his Converſation in Heaven.

Secondly, this is the beſt Remedy to ſupport us under the Evils of this preſent Life; as it leſſens the good, ſo it leſſens the evil of it too, and will ſerve to *ſupport* us under the one, as well as to *wean* us from the other. Nay, to ſpeak the truth, it will not ſo much ſupport us under theſe Evils as take them away, and render them ſlight and inconſiderable. For ſuppoſe the worſt that can be, Death, and a painful Death, he that has his Converſation in Heaven, views the Glory that ſhall be revealed there, and at once ſees that the ſharpeſt Sufferings of this preſent time are not worthy to be compared with them, no more than the *Point* of a Circle is with its *Circumference*: He contemplates the Joy that is ſet before him, and ſo indures the Croſs, and deſpiſes the Shame and the Pain too: For a view of Heaven will mitigate any Croſs upon Earth, and help us to incounter any Affliction as St. *Stephen* did his Martyrdom: He is one of thoſe ſteddy Men the Pſalmiſt ſpeaks of, *Pſal.* 112. 7.

who are not afraid at any evil Tidings, but his Heart stands fixed in the Lord. Much less will he for the dread of any Persecutions or Worldly Losses deny his Religion, or by a Trimming and Hypocritical Mode of Behaviour, court the Favour of those in Power, or by any sinful compliance part with a good Conscience. He sees nothing so great or so terrible in this World, as to fright him into any such unworthinesses; no, they that do so, have not their Conversation in Heaven, but are Earthly, Sensual and Devilish, and for all their Pretences to *Self-denial*, deny nothing of themselves that I know of, but their *Understandings*. He that truly converses in Heaven, sees infinitely more there than he can either *get* or *lose* here, and can therefore never be guilty of such a Foolish Exchange, as to gain not the *whole*, but a *little* of the World, and lose his own Soul.

Thirdly, This Dispensation of Life is the best Preparatory for Heaven that can possibly be; for besides that the *greatness* of that Happiness makes him that Contemplates it, despise any good or evil that may here stand in competition with it; he further considers the *Nature* and *Quality* of that Happiness, that it is an union of the Soul with her best and last end, that it is a clear Vision and an ardent Love of God, who cannot be seen by him that *Lives*; much less by him that

Lives

Lives ill; and this muſt needs put him upon thinking, that a Holy and Divine frame of Spirit is abſolutely requiſite, not only as a *Condition* to our *Admiſſion* into Heaven, but alſo as a *Condition* of *Enjoyment*, without which there is no being Happy even when we are there. And from this Conſideration, he naturally paſſes to fit himſelf for the enjoyment of his Maker, to Purify himſelf as he is Pure, to Purge, Refine, and Spiritualize his Nature, that ſo he may be qualified for the refined Joys of Heaven. The ſhort is, there are Two things that muſt and will be conſidered by him that has his Converſation in Heaven, the *Greatneſs* of the Happineſs there, and the *Nature* of it; and each of theſe has a particular influence for the preparing him for it: The former will make him Temptation-Proof againſt any preſent good or evil that ſhall ſtand in his way to his great Prize, and the latter will contribute to form and faſhion the frame of his Mind into a likeneſs and affinity with the end which he propoſes: But both together will ſo ſtrongly influence the Man, that he will become perfectly ἀναυταίσθητος, dead to himſelf and to all the Luſcious Reliſhes of the Corporeal Life, and the Life of God will be triumphantly ſeated in him, ſo that now he has but one only Will in the World, which is to have none at all of his own, but

to *annihilate* himself, that God may be all in all in him. And thus while like *Moses* he converses with God on this holy Mount, his Face shines with a Divine Glory, and he is transfigured into the likeness of him whom his Soul loves.

Fourthly and Lastly, This is a dispensation of Life, that affords the greatest Pleasure and Satisfaction of any in the World, to ascend the top of the Mystical *Pisgah*, and thence to take a survey of the Happy Land; to contemplate the infinite Perfection of God, and the Happiness of those Blessed Spirits that enjoy him, the Order of Angels, and that noble and blessed Communion of Saints; to contemplate the last and richest Scene of Providence, and the Discovery of all the rest that went before; when the reason of all difficult and perplexing Appearances shall be made plain, and the *manifold Wisdom* of God sent in a clear Light; to have our Minds imployed about the greatest and best things, to walk with God, and keep a constant Communication with Heaven, must needs be the sweetest as well as the noblest and most worthy Entertainment on this side of it. *Intellectual* Pleasures are certainly greater than *Sensual*, even by the Confession of the greatest Sensualists, as may appear from this single instance, in that Men will abstain from the greatest

greateſt Pleaſures of Senſe, that they may not loſe a good Reputation, which is an Intellectual good; and as Intellectual Pleaſures are greater than Senſual, ſo this is the greateſt of thoſe that are Intellectual. Concerning this the ſame may be ſaid that is of Wiſdom, that *her Ways are Ways of Pleaſantneſs, and that all her Paths are Peace*; that *ſhe is a Tree of Life to them that lay hold upon her, and happy is every one that retaineth her*; Prov. 3. 17. That they who eat of her ſhall yet be Hungry, and they that drink of her ſhall yet be Thirſty. For there is a certain inexhauſtible Well of Pleaſure, a fathomleſs Abyſs of Delight in this Heavenly Converſation, which they only, who have experimented it, can *conceive*, and which even they want Power to *deſcribe*.

This I know will be far from ſatisfying ſome Voluptuaries, who are ſunk ſo low into the contrary Life, that of Senſe and Carnality, that they will think a Man Mad that ſhall either *Talk* or *Live* at this Abſtracted rate; but to theſe I have Two things to ſay: Firſt, That their having no notion of the Pleaſure of this Diſpenſation, is no Objection againſt it; the thing may be true for any thing they know or can ſay to the contrary, for they are not, during the quick ſenſibility and invigoration of the lower Life, proper Judges in the caſe, any

more than the *Sense* it self is of an Intellectual Object; for these things are spiritually discerned by a certain Divine Taste and Sensation, which is a Faculty which these Men want.

The other thing I shall commend to the Sensualist is this, that since he is too scrupulous and sceptical to take our word for it, he would endeavour after such a degree at least of Spiritual Purification, as to try the Experiment, that as the Psalmist speaks, he would *Taste* and *See* how good and pleasant this Heavenly Conversation is; and then I'm much mistaken if he does not find that all the Madness lay on his side, if he does not confess that there are no Joys like Spiritual Joys, and that one Day spent in these *Anti-Courts* of Heaven is better than a Thousand.

And now since it appears to be a thing of so much reason and becomingness, and of so great use and advantage to have our Conversation in Heaven, methinks we should easily be perswaded to enter upon this Heavenly Dispensation of Life. The Region we now Converse in, is very incommodiously seated, and of an unwholsome Complexion, such as does not agree with the Constitution of the Soul, where she is always sickly and out of order, full of weaknesses and indispositions; why then do we not change our Abode, and remove

remove our dwelling into our Native Country, where there is a purer Air, and a more healthy Climate! When we hear or read a Deſcription of a very pleaſant Country, ſuch as the *Bermuda Iſlands*, where the Sky is Serene and Clear, the Air Temperate and Healthy, the Earth Fruitful and Entertaining, where there are Walks of Oranges, and Woods of Cedar Trees; though we have no probable proſpect of our going to dwell there, yet we can't chuſe but often think, and ſometimes dream of it, and wiſh our ſelves the happineſs of ſo pleaſant an Abode. Why then do not our Thoughts dwell more in Heaven, where beſides the far greater delightſomneſs of the Place, we have a particular *Intereſt* and *Concern* to invite us thither? 'Tis the hope of arriving at Heaven at laſt that ſupports our Life upon Earth; it is not able to ſupport it ſelf: One or two turns here, gives a Conſidering Man a full compaſs of its Enjoyments, and he no ſooner comes to underſtand them, but he deſpiſes them. And what ſhall a Wiſe Man do, what refuge has he after this Diſcovery, but to Converſe in Heaven? What Expedient is there left, but to *anticipate thoſe* Joys, when he can no longer *taſt theſe*?

So that there is a neceſſity of converſing in Heaven, if 'twere only to relieve the Vanity of Earth; and happy is the Man who has

has so much of Heaven while he is upon Earth: Yea, *Blessed is the Man whom thou chooses't O Lord, and receivest unto thee; he shall dwell in thy Court, and shall be satisfied with the Pleasures of thy House, even of thy Holy Temple*, Psal. 65. 4.

A Discourse concerning Submission to Divine Providence.

John 18. 11. *The Cup which my Father has given me, shall I not Drink it?*

THis is a Question which our Lord puts to himself; and 'tis well he did so, for had he put it to any body else, 'tis great odds but that it had been answered in the *Negative*; for the great and general Center of Human Nature, whither all the Lines of Appetite tend, and where they all meet, is *Happiness*; The desire of Happiness is the First and *Master-Spring* of the *Soul*, as the Pulse of the Heart is in the *Body*, that which sets all the Wheels on work, and governs all the *under-motions* of the Man: 'Tis that original Weight and Bias which the Soul

Soul firſt received from the Hands of her Creator, and which ſhe can never loſe ſo long as ſhe her ſelf is: 'Tis indeed the ſtrongeſt and moſt radical Appetite that we have, an Appetite to which God *has* not ſet any bounds, and to which Man *cannot*; an Appetite that is ungovernable and unconfined it ſelf, and that gives Meaſures and Laws to all the reſt; and conſequently there is nothing which ſo ill comports with our Nature, which ſo directly croſſes the *grain* of our Conſtitution, as that which threatens or offers the leaſt contradiction to this ruling Inclination of it. Hence it is that *Evil* is the great *antipathy* of Human Nature, which though it has many particular Averſions, yet this is her great and general Abhorrence: From this at its firſt approach the whole Man ſhrinks in, and ſtands averſe, and would be removed from it (if poſſible) an infinite diſtance; the *Animal* part of Man is againſt it, and the *Reaſon* of Man wonders and diſputes how ſuch an uncooth thing came into the World, and ſeveral *Hypotheſes* have been advanced to account for that ſtrange Appearance; πόθεν τὸ κακόν was the great knot of antient Morality, and the moſt gravelling Problem of all the Heathen Philoſophy; and I queſtion whether Reaſon without the aſſiſtance of Revelation can conquer the Difficulty. So that conſidering the Op-

Opposition that it carries to the whole Man, both to our *Appetites* and to our *Understandings*, there seems nothing more difficult than to be reconciled to it, though it be in order to a greater advantage, and we see an excellent glory behind the Cloud.

'Tis said by *Plato*, that *Pleasure* and *Pain* are the two Nails that fasten both the Wings of the Soul down to the Earth, and hinder its Ascent upward: and the Wise * Stoick has most excellently summ'd up the whole difficulty of Vertue into ἀπέχου and ὑπέχου to *Abstain* and *Sustain*: Indeed Abstinence and Patience are the Two most rough and uneasy Places in all the Stage of Vertue; the rest of her ways are ways of Pleasantness, and all her other Paths are Peace. But here the Traveller meets with Trouble and Discouragement, is ingaged in a point of Labour and Contention, and though in the Event he perform his Duty and bear forth good Seed, yet 'tis always with the reluctancy of his lower faculties, and (as the Psalmist expresses it,) *he goes on his way sorrowing*.

* *Epictetus.*

But the chiefest and noblest Scene of Vertue lies in *Patience*; 'tis hard to abstain from Pleasure, but 'tis much harder to indure Misery, (which is the Reason by the way that the Sanctions of Laws are generally taken rather from Punishments than from Re-

Rewards,) and of all Obedience, that which is *Passive* is most difficult; for we hate Pain to an higher degree than we love Pleasure. And of this the Infernal Spirit was so sensible, (one who dwelling with everlasting Burnings is best able to judge of the difficulty of submitting to Misery,) that he presumed to say concerning that excellent Person whom God had commended for his Integrity in all the instances of *Active* Obedience, and whom he himself knew to be a Miracle of *Patience* in particular, that if God would but put forth his Hand, and touch him with some near and cleaving Affliction, he would curse him to his Face, *Job.* 1. 11.

And to this purpose 'tis yet further observable, that even the Disciples of the Blessed Jesus whom he had picked and chosen out of the promiscuous Herd of Mankind, and who followed this Lamb whithersoever he went, and traced him through all the narrow paths of a Vertuous and Religious Life, yet when he came to Mount *Calvary*, within view of the Cross, they all forsook him and fled, stopt short at the Foot of the dreadful Hill, and left him to tread the Wine-press alone: and even he that had most courage and presence of Mind, and dared furthest, he whom St. *Chrysostom* calls the *Warm Disciple*, even he *followed him but afar off*, Luke 22. 54.

Nay,

Nay, even our Blessed Saviour himself, who besides the peculiar excellency of his Human Spirit, and the incentives of an Omnipotent Love, had also the Divinity of his Person for his immediate Succour and Support; as he fainted as to his *Bodily* strength under the *Load* of the Cross, so was he amazed into an Agony and Sweat of Blood at the very apprehension of what he was to suffer upon it, and almost fainted in his *Resolution* too, till after the recollections of Meditation, and the confirmation of an Angel, he overcame the tenderness and reluctancies of innocent Nature, with the perfection of Submission and Resignation, emptied himself of his own *Will*, as he had formerly done of his Heavenly *Glories*, and refused all help and deliverance both from the Guard of his Angels, and the over-officious Sword of his zealous Apostle, with this gentle Reproof, *Put up thy Sword into the Sheath; the Cup which my Father has given me shall I not drink it?*

The full sense of which Words is resolvible into these Two Propositions.

First, That every Affliction which befalls Man, is dispensed to him by the hand of Providence; which is intimated in these Words, *the Cup which my Father has given me.*

Secondly, That therefore he ought to submit to it with all Patience, Meekness, Contentedness

tentedness and Resignation of Spirit intimated in the last Clause, *Shall I not drink it?*

And First, that every Affliction which befalls Man, is dispensed to him by the hand of Providence: That there is such a thing as Providence in general, and that God does concern himself in the Government and Management both of the Material and Intellectual World, by ruling and ordering the *Motions* of the former, and the *Actions* and *Events* of the latter, though denyed by the School of *Epicurus*, is yet I think acknowledged by all that own a *Creation*, and certainly with great agreeableness and consistency with that Principle. For besides that Creation doth both *suppose* and *produce* Love towards the Creature, suppose it as the *Principle*, and produce it as the *Effect*, it being impossible that God should either create what he did not Love, or not Love what he has created; according to that Observation of the Wise Man, *Wisd.* 11. 32. *For thou lovest all the things that are, and abhorrest nothing which thou hast made; for never wouldst thou have made any thing, if thou hadst hated it*, I say, besides that Love of God which follows upon the Creation, and that care which as closely follows upon the Supposition of his Love, I further consider, that it had not been worth the while for God to have created a World, if he did not intend

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to govern it; for since the World is not capable of governing it self, and conducting the infinite variety of its own motions to any excellent end, and since without some conduct or other, it must needs fall into disorder and confusion, if God will not undertake the Government of it; to what purpose should he make such a World, which without his care of it would bring him more *Dishonour* by its *After-disorders*, than *Glory* by its *first Production?* And Disorder is a thing so opposite to God, that we find he could not be reconciled to a *Natural* Chaos, much less then can he be to a *Moral* one, especially in a World of his own raising; for indeed Creation is too great a work to be bestowed upon a World which is ever after to be abandoned and left to it self. And since God has ingrafted into the nature of every Animal, affectionate Propensions towards its own Productions, whether Natural, Mechanical or Intellectual, nothing can be more absurd than to imagin, that he would be so ill a *Parent* himself, as to expose this his own Offspring, and which assoon as brought forth, he Loved, and pronounced very good, to the uncertainties of Chance and Contingency.

Besides, we are naturally led to the existence of Providence by the consideration of the Divine Perfections, such as his Omnipotence,

tence, Omnipreſence, Omniſcience, Goodneſs and Juſtice. And accordingly we find, that even *Ariſtotle* and the *Peripatetitks*, who would not allow the World to be *Created* by God, as ſuppoſing it to be Eternal and Uncreated, yet were forced from the Contemplation of the Divine Excellencies to acknowledge it to be *Govern'd* by him. They own'd a Providence, though they diſown'd a Creation, and that from a ſerious conſideration of the excellent nature and attributes of God, which they thought would ſufficiently ingage him to take care of the World though he did not make it: And truly were the Suppoſition poſſible, I ſhould yet think as they do; for ſure God is too great and too good a Being to ſuffer Anarchy and Confuſion wherever there is a Capacity of Order.

Epicurus indeed turns this Argument quite a contrary way, and from the Perfection of the Deity, argues for his profound Repoſe and Inactivity; that being fixed upon his own Center, and full of himſelf, he has nothing to do but to live at large, ſecure and unconcerned, and enjoy the richneſs of his own Eſſence, with an infinite and undivided Complacency. But this all depends upon that precarious and ill natured Principle of his, that all Benevolence proceeds from Indigence, or which is the ſame in other terms, that all Love is Self Love; which in-

deed if true, will oblige us to confess, that the more perfect and self-sufficient any Being is, the less solicitous he must be of the concerns of others; and consequently a Being absolutely Perfect as God is, must of necessity be wholly destitute of all Benevolence towards other beings, and without any concern for their welfare. For no consequence is more plain than this, that if all Love be from Want, then that Being who is absolutely removed from Want cannot be capable of any Love. *Epicurus* his Inference therefore is very right, but the ground upon which he proceeds is false, in making all Love to owe its rise to Indigence.

I shall not here undertake a *direct* confutation of this illiberal and straitlaced Notion, having particularly considered it elsewhere; I shall only remark at present, that the falseness of this *Epicurean* Principle, is put out of all Question to us who believe a *Creation*; for if, that Love proceeds from want, be an Argument that a perfect Being can have no Love, then we may argue as well the other way, that if a perfect Being does Love, then Love does not proceed from want. And we have sufficient discovery of this in the Creation, which considering the Self-sufficiency of the Divine Nature, must needs be the effect of a pure, unselfish, and dis-

Theor. and Regulat. of Love. p. 52.

disinteressed Love. Which by the way is a consideration that mightily commends the excellency of the Divine Goodness, and should wind up our Affections to great Heights of Praise and Gratitude.

And as the *Self-Sufficiency* of God is no Bar *against* Providence, (being only upon a mistaken Principle of *Epicurus* alledged to that purpose,) so are his other Perfections a strong Argument for it; *that* is consistent with it, and *these* do necessarily infer it. Thus his Omnipotence, Omnipresence, and Omniscience render him abundantly able to sit at the Helm of this great Vessel, and his Goodness and Justice ingage him to undertake the Charge. He that contemplates the former, can no longer question, *Job.* 22. 13. *How doth God know? Can he judge through the dark Cloud?* Nor he that contemplates the latter, suspect, that he purposely declines the Office, and *walks* idle and unconcern'd in the *Circuit of Heaven.* Besides, the Perfections of God would not appear so conspicuously, if there were no Providence. 'Tis great to Create, but 'tis more to Govern a World; as the Skill of the Artist is more seen in well ordering and artfully touching the Strings of a Musical Instrument, than in the first making and framing of it.

And if it be once granted that there is a Providence, 'tis an absurd and ridiculous

conceit, to confine it, (as some do,) to the *Superlunary* Regions; for the same Arguments that infer the being of Providence in general, conclude also for the *Universality* of it. 'Tis most congruous to think that the Providence of God is of equal extent with his Creation, (for sure that which was not too mean to be Created, cannot be too mean to be Governed,) and that the same loving and Harmonious Spirit that first moved upon the face of the Waters and ranged the most *minute* particles of Matter into Beauty and Order, does still run through the now Organized Mass, and preside over, and sweetly direct, not only the Greater, but also the *Lesser Motions* of this his most exquisite Machine: For without this the Harmony of the Universe would be very defective, and its parts disproportionate and ill-sorted. 'Tis true, Beauty and Order would dwell above, but all would be Chaos and Confusion below, and the *Earth* would still be *without form and void.* And thus the irregularity of the lower World would cast a disparagement upon the whole System of things, as the untunableness of One or Two Instruments dis-recommends the whole Musical Consort.

'Tis therefore necessary to affirm, that the Providence of God extends to both Worlds, as the Sun Beautifies and inlightens each

each Hemiſphere. In this reſpect alſo as well as others, that Divine Compariſon will hold, *God is Light, and in him is no Darkneſs at all.* But though nothing be too ſmall or inconſiderable for the Comprehenſive reach of the Divine Cognizance, yet we may reaſonably ſuppoſe that he conſiders the value of his Creatures, and proportions his Providential Care according to their different excellencies. Now throughout all the order of the Viſible Creation, Man is the moſt noble and accompliſhed Being, and conſequently the chiefeſt Object, the moſt peculiar *Charge* of Providence; ſo peculiar, that as the *Creation* of other Sublunary things carried a peculiar reſpect to Man, ſo is their *Government* too chiefly in ſubordination to to his Intereſt. And indeed 'tis no more than what by the Meaſures of Proportion we are warranted to ſuppoſe, that he ſhould have a more than ordinary Intereſt in the care and ſuperintendency of his Creator, who was made by an immediate Pattern from himſelf, and with his ſolemn Counſel and deliberation.

Nor is this ever waking and broad Eye of Divine Providence open only on the Societies and Communities of Men, and intent only upon the Revolutions of States and Kingdoms, but alſo watches over the affairs and concerns of every particular Perſon in the

World; no Man is too little and despicable for the notice of Providence, however he may be overlook'd by his Fellow-Creatures; for we are told in Scripture not only of the Guardian Angel of the *Jews* and the Prince of *Persia*, but that we should take heed how we offend or despise even the meanest of Men, because of the interest they have among the Angels of special Presence, the *Courtiers* of Heaven, *Matt.* 18. 7. Nay we are told by the same infallible Oracle, that even the very Hairs of our Head are all numbred; so that not only the Meanest of Men, but even the meanest things relating to them, their most indifferent and insignificant concerns are under the Charge and Care of Providence.

And if the care of Providence be so very punctual and exact even to Grains and Scruples in the most trifling and indifferent Concerns of Man, we may with great reason conclude, that it is much more so in our more weighty and considerable Interests: And since not only our present but future Happiness depends much upon various junctures of Circumstances and States of Life, we have consequently reason to conclude, that these are more particularly conducted by God's Providential Hand; and accordingly that *Affliction comes not forth of the Dust, neither does Trouble spring out of the Ground,*

Job

Job 5. 6. but are disposed and ordered by God, and Arrest us with a Divine Commission. And accordingly the excellent Wisdom of our Church in her Office for the Visitation of the Sick, piously orders the Minister to exhort the Sick Person after this Form, *Dearly beloved, know this, that Almighty God is the Lord of Life and Death, and of all things to them pertaining, as Youth, Strength, Health, Age, Weakness and Sickness: Wherefore, whatsoever your Sickness is, know you certainly that it is God's Visitation*, &c. As indeed we have reason to think that every other Affliction is as well as Sickness, that there is a Chastising as well as Destroying Angel, and that all Plagues are from God as well as those of *Egypt*; that no Calamity can either privily steal or violently break in upon us without the Divine notice and particular permission. But that every bitter Draught which we take, is weighed, mingled and reach'd out to us by an invisible Hand, by the Dispensation of Providence, that 'tis a *Cup which our Father has given us*: Our infinitely Wise, Good, and Compassionate Father, one who knows to chuse for us infinitely better than we can for ourselves, and whose infinite Goodness, Love and Faithfulness, give us all possible assurance that he will use his Wisdom for our best Interest, and give *good Gifts to his Children*.

Which leads me to conſider the Second general Propoſition, that therefore we ought to ſubmit to every Diſpenſation with all Patience, Meekneſs, Contentedneſs and Reſignation of Spirit.

Patience and Reſignation under all Providential diſpenſations however difficult in the *Practick*, has yet perhaps more to be ſaid for it in the *Theory*, than any one inſtance in all Morality; but I am obliged be the limits of my Diſcourſe, to confine my Thoughts at preſent to ſuch Arguments and Conſiderations only as may be afforded by the excellent Nature, Attributes and Relation of God. For 'twas for this reaſon alone, that our Bleſſed Lord chearfully ſubmitted to the drinking of his Bitter Potion, becauſe 'twas given him by his Father, *The Cup which my Father has given me.*

And that this is a Pillar ſtrong enough for ſo great a weight, a ſufficient Argument for the moſt Heroical Reſignation under the moſt accumulated Affliction, not to argue from the example of our Bleſſed Lord who ſupported his labouring Courage by this ſingle Conſideration, under the weight of his unparallel'd Agony, will clearly appear, if we conſider ſome of the excellent Attributes and Perfections of God. Thoſe which more eminently conduce to this purpoſe, and wherewith I ſhall at preſent content my

ſelf,

ſelf, are his Supream Dominion, his Self-ſufficiency, his Infinite Wiſdom, Goodneſs, and his Paternal Relation to us.

First then, we may conſider, that he from whoſe Hands we receive our bitter Cup, has a Sovereign Right and Dominion over us; which though we ſtate at the loweſt pitch, and do not bottom it with ſome upon the ὑπεροχὴ, or ſuper-eminency of the Divine Nature, or with others on the unlimitedneſs of the divine Power, but rather (which indeed ſeems more reaſonable,) upon the benefit of Creation, yet even then will follow that he may juſtly make what deductions he pleaſe from the ſum of our Happineſs, within the Compaſs and Latitude of that Benefit. And conſequently we have no juſt reaſon to murmur, as if Injured, though either by Deprivements or poſitive Inflictions he diminiſhed our Happineſs, ſo long till he leave us in a ſtate juſt preferable to that of *Non-exiſtence*; though he ſhould draw out our Happineſs to the very Lees, ſtrip us of all good but that ſlender one of *Being*, and forbid us the taſt of every Tree but this *One*, that grows in the whole Paradiſe of God. Thus I ſay by reaſon of the freeneſs of his Favours, God may deal with the moſt innocent and ſpotleſs of all his Angels, who after all this vaſt Subſtraction, and in this ſtate of extream Barrenneſs and Sterility, are yet his Debtors;

Debtors; and therefore instead of Murmuring and Repining, obliged to take up the Resolution of the Psalmist, *While I live I will praise the Lord; yea as long as I have any Being,* (though nothing besides,) *I will sing Praises unto my God,* Psal. 146.

But though God might justly do this, and consequently though even in this case, Patience and Resignation were highly reasonable, yet 'tis not his method to deal thus arbitrarily with us, or to proceed to the utmost Bounds of his Dominion; he has by his very donation of Being to his Creatures, given them all the fair grounds imaginable to hope and expect that all his after-proceedings toward them shall be agreeable and correspondent to that his first Favour, and that he will never take from us the least Scruple of that Felicity wherewith he invested us at the first Minute of our existence, without either our own fault, or a reference to some further Advantage; the first of which takes away all occasion of Complaint, and the Second calls for our Praise and Eucharist.

And that this is the measure whereby God deals with us, we may be well assured, if we consider the other remaining Attributes, his Self-sufficiency, his infinite Wisdom and Goodness, and his Paternal relation to us; God is a Being, whose Happiness as 'tis always perfect, equal, uniform, and at full

full heighth like his other Excellencies, ſo is it wholly abſolved and conſummated within himſelf, and admits of no Foreign Ingredient into its Compoſition. He is as happy as he can ever poſſibly be in in his own Eſſence, and conſequently can neither *receive* nor *propoſe* any Advantage to himſelf in any change that is wrought in the Creature; he ſtands in no need of our *Happineſs*, much leſs of our *Miſery*; and therefore whenſoever he lays an Affliction upon us, ſince he can have no Intereſt of his own to ſerve by it, we muſt either ſay that he afflicts us meerly for Affliction's ſake, or that he deſigns it in order to a more important good of the Patient: To affirm the former would be Abſurdity, Impiety, and Blaſphemy, and withal contrary to the expreſs voice of Scripture, which tells us that God does not *afflict willingly, nor grieve the Children of Men*, Lam. 3. 33. The latter therefore muſt be concluded, that all the Evils which God diſpences to us, (except only where our extream Demerit alters the Caſe, as in the inſtance of *Damnation*,) are deſigned for our greater Intereſt either here or hereafter, and to *Perfect* or Conſecrate us *through Sufferings*, Heb. 2. 10. They are indeed the Arrows of the Almighty, but ſent upon a Friendly Errand; preſent Interruptions, but future Inlargements of our Happineſs; like the

the Misty Veil of the Morning, which for a while shuts in the Rays of the Sun, but at length contributes to the greater Lustre and Triumph of the Day.

And to this purpose we may further consider, that the great Moderator of the Universe, and Supream Disposer of all Events, is infinitely Wise and Good, as well as Self-sufficient, and consequently cannot but do things for the *Best*; for as he is too Self-sufficient to drive on any interest of his own, so is he too Wise to mistake ours, and too good not to execute the dictates of his Wisdom; the consequence of which two Suppositions, must needs be the disposal of all things in the best way and manner that is possible. 'Tis much more rational in it self, and less derogatory to the Divine Perfections, to suppose with *Epicurus* that God does not at all meddle with the Affairs of the World, than that he does it by *halves*, and steers his great Vessel with a disadvantagious conduct. There is no Artist, but will perform to the utmost of his Skill, provided it be as easy for him to make his Piece compleat, as to *under-work* it. And that 'tis so to God, we can no more dispute, than we can the absolute Infinity and Perfection of his Nature. Certain therefore it is, that if God governs the World, 'tis govern'd altogether as well as 'twas made, that is, as well

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as is poſſible: Θεὸς γεωμετρεῖ, ſays *Plato*, God acts the part of a Geometrician, does all things exactly and regularly; thus he made the World, and thus he governs it, he proceeds by the ſame Standard in both, and his Government of the World is no leſs Mathematically exact than his Creation of it. 'Tis true indeed, the exactneſs of the former is not ſo obvious to our obſervation, as that of the latter, nor are we ſo well able to judge of the *Moral*, as of the *Natural* Geometry of God: But conſidering the Perfection of God, and the Imperfection of our Capacities, we have no reaſon to queſtion, but that one is as exact as the other, and both as exact as poſſible. Not that this is to be underſtood in an *Abſolute*, but in a *Relative* Senſe; for as to the Perfection of the Natural World, we do not require that every Species of Being ſhould be in the higheſt Perfection, whereof a Creature is capable, (1 Cor. 12. 17. *for if the whole Body were an Eye, where were the Hearing?*) So neither are we to meaſure the perfection of the Moral World by ſingle and ſeparate Inſtances, but by the whole conduct and courſe of the Divine Diſpenſation. And then as in Muſick, what is Diſcord in particular and ſeparately conſidered, will be Harmony upon the whole; a far more excellent Harmony to the *Intellect*, than the moſt curious and artful diſpoſition of Sounds can be to the *Senſe*. 'Tis

'Tis true, we want light in this Valley of Darkneſs and Night of Ignorance, to diſcern this Harmony and beautiful conſpiracy of things, (which is the true ground of all the Diſcontent that is in the World;) but hereafter, when our Eye-ſight ſhall be cleared and fortified to ſee our Glorious Maker as he is, we ſhall then with the Beauty of his *Face* behold that of his *Providence*, we ſhall ſee the deep Plot of this great and wonderful *Drama* laid open and unravel'd, and how even the moſt Cloudy and Doubtful ſtates of things wind up into Beauty and Harmony: We ſhall ſee and be well ſatisfied, that there is a Geometry in his *Providence*, as well as in his *Creation*; and that as all things were made, ſo are they governed too in *Number*, *Weight*, and *Meaſure*. Then ſhall we not only patiently and meekly ſubmit to, but with full acquieſcence and complacency of Spirit, rejoyce in the accompliſhment of the whole Will of God, though it be in the Damnation of our neareſt Friends and Relatives. Then ſhall there be an intire reſolution of our Will into the Divine, God ſhall be all in all, *Epheſ.* 3. 10. and his πολυποικιλος σοφια, his manifold and various Wiſdom, though not fully comprehended, yet ſhall be ſo much underſtood, as to be fully juſtified by all his Children.

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In the mean time, till we are in a capacity to judge our selves, we may and ought to repose a firm confidence in the Skill of the Divine Dramatist, and believe implicitly that there is a most incomparable Beauty in in the whole Scheme and System of this great Master-piece, though to us who sit in a dark corner of the Theatre, some of its parts seem obscure and perplex'd; that (as the Wise Man expresses it,) *Wisdom reaches from one end to another*, Wisd. 8. 1. and that he has *poured her out upon all his Works*, Eccles. 1. 9.

And is there now any room for such a Passion as Grief or Discontent after such a Consideration as this? Can a Man acting upon this Supposition be so absurd as to be disturb'd at any Accident, to repine under any Condition, to take to heart the loss of any Friend, though another and a better Self, though this whole Happiness were compendiously sum'd up in him, so as to lose all at a Blow; when at the same time he seriously considers, that all things are as well as they can possibly be? Certainly he that is troubled at any Affliction, may well be suspected of one of these two things, either of forgetting that God governs the World, or of charging him with Male-Administration. He insinuates by his Grief and Discontent this much at least, that he dis-

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likes the order of the Univerſe, and that if he were placed at the Helm, he would ſteer its Courſe after another method; and does therefore deſerve to be remembred of that which *Luther* told *Melanchon*, when troubled that the Reformation did not move on ſo ſmoothly as he would have it, *Monendus eſt Philippus deſinat eſſe Rector Mundi*, *Philip* is to be put in mind that he leave off governing the World.

For certainly were we thoroughly ſatisfied of the infinite Wiſdom and Goodneſs of God in the diſpoſal of all events, were this Perſwaſion deeply fixed in us, and intimately preſent with us, that all is for the Beſt, we ſhould ſee Argument enough not only for Patience and Contentment, but alſo for Rejoycing and giving Thanks in all Diſpenſations; we ſhould (as *Seneca*, Epiſt. 96. well expreſſes the Temper of his Wiſe Man,) *non ſolum Deo parere, ſed & aſſentiri*, not only ſubmit with reſignation to the Divine Will, but approve and imbrace it with full choice, as our beſt Lot and Portion, and ſay with another excellent Stoick, Ἐγὼ ὑπὲρ πάντων τούτων πρὸς ἀνθρώπους ὑπολογήσομαι, I will not only endure, but plead for the diſpenſations of Providence, and juſtify them to the World. We ſhould not then content our ſelves with that of the Royal Prophet, *I became dumb and opened not my Mouth*,

* *Epictetus.*

Month, because it was thy doing, Psal. 39. but proceed further, and kiss the Cross even while it oppresses and galls our Shoulders, and go forth to meet our Sufferings, after the example of our Divine Master, who withdrew voluntarily to the Garden where he foreknew he should be apprehended, and there as freely surrendred himself when he might have escaped: We should not so much as wish to have avoided any Calamity; and though we took never so much delight in our Paradise, yet after we heard the Voice of God walking in the Garden, and received his Sentence to depart, we should not endeavour a re-entrance, though we could remove the fiery Sentinel, and prevail with the angry Cherub to sheath his Sword; but should rather thank God for his severe Mercy, and say with the great example of Patience, *The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord*, Job. 1. 11.

There remains yet one Consideration more, and that is the *Paternal* relation of God; he that gives us the bitter Cup, besides the Essential benignity of his nature, has also a near relation to indear him to us; he is our *Father*, and therefore cannot but be very tenderly affected toward us. He loved us when we were but an *Idea* in his own Understanding, much more does he now, when we have actually participated of his

Spiritual Nature, and not only so, but of his peculiar likeness too? Add to this, that he has shewn himself to be a Father by infinite Favours and Kindnesses, some of which border almost upon Fondness and Partiality, in so much that they have raised *envy* in some of the Angels, and *wonder* in all the rest: For there are things done for Man, which the Angels have long contemplated, and yet still *desire to look into*, 1 Pet. 1. 12.

Shall I not then drink the Cup which my Father, this my Father has given me? My My Father who is too full and perfect to need my Misery, though in respect of his Supream Dominion he might to great degrees arbitrarily afflict me; who is too wise to mistake my true interest, and too good (for he is Essential Goodness, and his very Definition is Love, 1 *John* 4. 8.) to prescribe me a Draught which he knows not to be wholsom for me? Who has given me all the good I enjoy, and who has parted with more for my sake, than he can possibly take from me in this World; for he has given me his Beloved Son, the brightness of his Glory and the express Image of his Person, *shall I then receive good*, so great a good at his hands, *and not receive evil*, Job 2. 10. Shall I refuse the Cup which my Father, this my Father has given me? No, may the considering Sufferer say, I will welcome the sharpest

ſharpeſt Arrow that comes from his Quiver, I will reſt heartily ſatisfied with his ſevereſt diſpenſations, and though he kill me, yet will I truſt in him.

Let us then at all times and on all occaſions with all Patience, Meekneſs, Contentedneſs and Reſignation of Spirit be Paſſively as well as Actively conformable to the Divine Will, and demean our ſelves as becomes Children under the Chaſtiſement of ſo wiſe and ſo good a Father; let us not only with calmneſs endure, but with content and ſatisfaction approve and juſtify all his Diſpenſations; ſo will he juſtify and acquit us hereafter, and to the preſent benefit of our *Affliction*, ſuperadd a Reward of our *Patience*, and reveal to us ſuch an excellent Glory with which the Sufferings of this preſent time are not worthy to be compared.

To which God of his Infinite Mercy conduct us all, *Amen.*

A Discourse concerning the Folly of Covetousness.

Luke 12. 20. *But God said unto him, Thou Fool---*

'TIS somewhat strange to consider that Wisdom should be a thing *desired* by *all*, and highly *pretended* to by the *most*, and yet that Men should betray their Folly in nothing more than in their Judgments concerning Wisdom; and yet this is the frequent as well as unhappy fate of the many Pretenders to Wisdom that are in the World, who in nothing take such absurd measures as in this. We shew indeed enough of our Weakness and Ignorance in the search of *Nature*, and in what we call our *Philosophy*: We live among Mysteries and Riddles, and there is not one thing that comes in at our Senses, but what baffles our Understandings; but though (as the Wise Man complains, *Wisd.* 9. 16.) *hardly do we guess aright at the things that are upon Earth, and with labour do we find the things that are before us*; yet find them out

we do in ſome meaſure, and are ſeldom ſo very much out in our Judgments, as to miſtake in *Extremities*, and take one contrary for another: 'Tis very rare that we take the vertue of a Plant to be Hot, when 'tis extreamly Cold, and he muſt be a very mean *Botanic* now, that ſhall gather Poiſon inſtead of Pot herbs; and yet this we often do in the conduct of Life, and in the great Ends and Meaſures of it. Here we often miſtake one contrary for another, Evil for Good, Darkneſs for Light, and Folly for Wiſdom. We do not only act fooliſhly, (for that were ſomething tolerable, would we but acknowledge and be aſhamed of our weakneſs,) but we back this Folly with another, applaud and juſtify our abſurd meaſures, and think our ſelves Wiſe not only while we are Fools, but for that very thing wherein we are ſo.

The generality of Men place their Wiſdom in that which is directly their Folly, and their greateſt Wiſdom in their greateſt Folly; they lay deep Plots for ſhallow Intereſts, and are very ſlight and ſuperficial in their Contrivances about things of real Moment and Conſequence; they work out a frame of little Deſigns, with as much induſtry, art and warineſs, as the laborious Spider weaves her fine-wrought Web, and to as much purpoſe, to catch a *Fly*, to bring about a *Triſle*,

when the same, perhaps half the labour and thoughtfulness would have served for the securing a weighty and substantial Interest: And yet when they have done this, they think they have been very Shrewd and Politick, and compassed a very notable Point, and are Proud of their little Atchievement, and fancy the Title of *Wise* as much their due, as if pronounced so by the *Oracle*, and as sure and well established, as if *their* Wisdom as well as that of *Solomon*, had built her House upon Seven Pillars, little thinking all the while that he that dwelleth in Heaven shall laugh them to Scorn, that the Lord shall have them in Derision: *Psal.* 2. 4. That God, whose Ways are not as our Ways, nor his Thoughts like our thoughts, has already weighed them in a truer Ballance than that wherein they weigh themselves, and finds them wanting in what they chiefly pretended to, and charges them with downright Folly and Madness. For this was the case of the rich Man in the Parable, the Fruitfulness of his Ground had put him upon a new Expedient, and he was very busie and thoughtful within himself how to find room to dispose of his Goods; what shall I do, says he, because I have no room where to bestow my Fruits? The Poor Man it seems was as much straitned in his Plenty, as other Men use to be in the extreamest Poverty;

What ſhall I do? The very Language of thoſe who are reduced to *Straits*; Do? Why, give the overplus to the Poor; and that thou mayſt no be ſo overſtock'd again another Year, part with a good piece of Land, and build an *Hoſpital*. No, ſays he, I underſtand better things than ſo, this will I do, I will pull down my Barns and build greater, and there will I beſtow (not on the Poor,) all my Fruits and my Goods; and I will ſay to my Soul, Soul thou haſt much Goods laid up for many Years, take thine Eaſe, Eat, Drink and be Merry. This was his Reſolution, and a Wiſe one too as he thought, applauding himſelf as much in the Wiſdom of his Contrivance, as in the Fruitfulneſs of his Ground: *But God ſaid unto him, Thou Fool*--

It is here ſuppoſed, that the Rich Man thought he had done wiſely, and proceeded by the beſt Meaſures of Prudence and Diſcretion, in that the Judgment of God is here by way of Oppoſition ſet againſt his; he it ſeems, and God were of two different Apprehenſions, *But God ſaid unto him*,--From the Words therefore I ſhall in the Firſt place obſerve, how vaſtly the Judgment of God differs from that of Men, and particularly that what we count Wiſdom here, is Folly with him: And ſince the Judgment of God is always infallible, and according to the

truth and reality of things, I shall therefore in the Second place consider the great Folly of what God here condemns as such; First, Of Sin in general; Secondly, Of placing our Happiness and Content in the good things of this World: And here I shall consider the great Folly of Covetousness, and particularly of the Covetous Rich Man in the Text.

And First, I observe how vastly different the Judgment of God is from that of Men, and particularly that what we count Wisdom here, is Folly with him. *My Thoughts* says God by the Prophet, *are not your Thoughts, neither are your Ways my Ways; for as the Heavens are higher than the Earth, so are my Ways higher than your Ways, and my Thoughts than your Thoughts*, Isa. 5. 5. Indeed the disproportion is very great between Earth and Heaven, between the Point and the Circumference of so vast a Circle, and yet this does but faintly shadow out the mighty disproportion that is betweeen the Measures of Men and the Ways of God; for the difference is as great, as between Truth and Falshood, which are removed from each other by an unmeasurable distance. There's more Truth than we are easily aware of in that fancy of *Homer*, that the Gods call things by other Names than we do; so far are they from thinking our *Thoughts*, that they do not so much as speak in our *Phrase*.

Not

Not only the Thoughts of God, are above our reach, but even his very Words are ἄρρητα ῥήματα, Words that cannot be utter'd by a Mortal Tongue, nor understood by an *imbodyed* Understanding; there's an unimaginable difference even in the very *Nomenclature* as well as the *Logick* of Earth and Heaven, for God dwells in *unapproachable* Light and Glory, nay he himself as St. *John* tells us, is a pure and unmix'd Light, a Light which has no Darkness, and to which nothing is dark, but all things open and naked. He therefore pierces through the very Essences of things, sees them all in their proper Colours, and calls them all by their proper Names. He has before him in one simple view tho whole *Field* of Truth; nay he is very Truth himself, and consequently can no more be deceived in his Judgment of things, than he can cease to be what he is. But we, though we see in his Divine Light, yet we have it reflected to us through false Mediums, and mingled with Clouds and Mists, and thick Darkness. We look upon Truth as we do upon the Face of the Setting Sun, through a gross and fallacious *Atmosphere*, and by a *Refracted* Ray, which makes it appear where it is not; for we see through a Veil of Flesh those dim *Spectacles* of the Soul, and the Vapours of the Body cloud the Understanding, and blunt the Edge of the

the Mind. We seldom discern things as they truly are, and when we do, we can hardly keep true to the Judgment which we have once rightly made, but are oftentimes by the intervening *Eclipses* of sudden Passion, actually ignorant of what we habitually know, and then act as foolishly and absurdly, as if we had never known it. These are the accidental Disadvantages we labour under, besides the finiteness of our understandings, which even in the Perfection of our Nature are bounded within a narrow compass. And since this is the Case between God and us, the Judgment which God makes of things, must needs be vastly different from the Sentiments of Men; for if the Judgment of one Man be so widely different from that of another, if the Conceptions of Philosophers be so far removed from the fancy of the Vulgar, and the Measures of an Experienced Statesman be so quite otherwise than those of a poor Home-bred Peasant, how vastly different must the Measures and Judgments of God be from those of Men, who sees Darkness even in the Angels of Light, and charges the loftiest Seraph with Folly! Certainly so very different, that they are for the most part quite contrary; insomuch, that what we think *Truth*, and withall dogmatically pronounce as such, and perhaps blind with an *Anathema*

them; God in the mean while judges to be Error; and what we take to be Wiſdom, he eſteems to be Folly: And I doubt moſt of our Wiſdom is of ſuch a *Stamp*, as will not *paſs* above in the Regions of Light, however current it may be here below by the advantage of this our *Night* and *Obſcurity*: And the Apoſtle ſays plainly of the Wiſdom of the World, (which indeed is the Wiſdom of the *moſt*,) that 'tis Fooliſhneſs with God.

But of this we ſhall be better convinc'd by ſome particular Inſtances, whereof there are a Multitude, but I ſhall briefly touch upon a few. And Firſt, as to the frame of the *Natural* World, ſome Mathematicians and Naturaliſts have quarrel'd with the Geometry and Contrivance of it; one diſlikes the Situation and Motion of the Sun, in making ſome Countries ſo very Hot, and ſome ſo very Cold, and in occaſioning ſo frequent *Eclipſes*. Another quarrels with the conduct of the Weather, and can by no means think it well that a full Cloud ſhould empty it ſelf upon the barren Sand, or upon the Sea, when in the mean time many a rich Ground is almoſt ſtarved for want of Relief from Heaven; and he can as little reconcile it to wiſe Adminiſtration that the hopes of the promiſing Year ſhould be cruſh'd in Pieces by the rude Arreſt of an unſeaſonable Froſt.

Another

Another wonders to what purpose there should be such vast numbers of little Insects, why there should be any such thing as *Poison*, and why among Fishes the Greater should prey upon the Less, and why those which are Food for us, should be so thick set with little Bones; and he can never forgive Nature for the Luxuriancy and easie growth of Weeds, when choice Flowers are hardly brought up even with Labour and Care. But to all this and the like, the Judgment of God stands directly opposed, who upon a Solemn Review of his Works pronounced all things good that he had made, and found not one *Erratum* in the whole Book of Nature.

Thus again as to the Administration of the *Moral* World, we don't like the System of this neither, but are wont to be dissatisfied; First, That there should be any such thing as *Evil* in it; this has been censured as a great Flaw by the whole School of Philosophers, and the most favourable Plea they could advance for it, was to resolve it into *Necessity*, and the Invincible *Stubbornness* of Matter; as much as to say, God could not help it. And those who could be pretty well reconciled to the *being* of Evil in the World, would yet by no means indure to think that the greatest share of it should light upon good Men. This was ever an un-

unanſwerable Scandal, and an unmoveable Objection; and yet 'tis moſt certain, that if God did not judge it beſt upon the whole matter, that there ſhould be Evil in the World, and that the moſt of it too, ſhould fall upon thoſe who deſerved the leaſt, he would never ſuffer either the one or the other.

There is yet another thing in relation to the Moral World, which lies very croſs upon our Minds, and that is the Adjournment of the full Adminiſtration of Juſtice to another World; we would fain ſee it in this, and are for an immediate and viſible diſtinction and ſeparation to be made between Good and Bad, between the Tares and the Wheat; and becauſe we ſee no ſuch difference made, we are apt to cenſure the Order, if not to queſtion the very Being of Divine Providence. But it ſeems the Judgment of God is againſt ours, he thinks it not ſo well that the Tares ſhould now be ſeparated from the Wheat, but that *both ſhould grow together till the Harveſt*, Mat. 13. 30.

Thus again as to the *Matter* of the Chriſtian Faith, and the *manner* of planting it in the World, which the Apoſtle in one Word calls the *Preaching of the Croſs*; this we know was a Stumbling Block to the *Jews*, and Fooliſhneſs of the Wiſe *Greeks*, who were than the *Virtuoſo's* of the World; and

yet

yet we are told by an inspired Pen, that 'twas both the *Power* and the *Wisdom* of *God*, 1 Cor. 1. 24.

Thus again as to the Government of the Christian Church, even those who have received the Christian Faith, are not altogether satisfied with that; for many of us are apt to think that Christ would have made much better Provision than he has for the good of the Church, if he had constituted in it an *Infallible Guide*, and Visible Judge of Controversies, by whom all Difficulties might be cleared, and all Disputes ended, which now so confound and divide the Christian World; I say many who do not believe that there is any such Constitution, are yet apt to think and say, that 'twere a thing much to be wish'd it had been so, and that 'twould have been a great deal better so than otherwise; and yet God we see in his Wisdom has not thought fit to have it so.

Thus again as to the condition of Human Life, we commonly imagin it would be mightily for our Advantage to have a prospect of *Futurities*, and to foresee what shall happen to us hereafter; and accordingly we are very curious to taste of the Fruit of *this* Tree of Knowledg, and to pry into the obscure Manuscript of Destiny; and some are so impatient, that they will have recourse to the Devil for such Discoveries rather than fail.

fail. And yet we see God in his manifold Wisdom has thought fit to *seal* up this Book of Futurities from our Eyes, and will not trust us with so *dangerous* a piece of Knowledge.

Thus again Lastly, We many of us think it a great Point of Wisdom, to heap up Wealth, to get Honours and Preferments, to raise Families, to perpetuate a Name; and we are hugely satisfied with our good Policy and Discretion, if we can secure to our selves a little Portion of this dirty Planet, this little Spot, this Point, though we pay for it, not only the Price of Labour and Care, Contempt and Disgrace, Danger and continual Fear, but even the great Price of our future Inheritance, and part with our Religion, and our very Souls in the Exchange. This we oftentimes think Wisdom to do for a *little* of the World; whereas in the Judgment of God, to gain the *whole* upon such Terms, would be but an ill Bargain. *What shall it profit a Man*, says our Saviour, *to gain the whole World, and lose his own Soul?* Yea, but there are some, and never so many as in this Age, that think this no such unprofitable Merchandize, but are very well content to sell Heaven for Earth, Happiness for Vanity, and will readily part with the great Reversion of another World for a Turf of Ground in present Possession. This is the

way

way of them, and they think they do well, and that they may say of themselves all the while what the Wise King did in the midst of all his sensual Indulgencies, *Eccl.* 2. 9. *also my Wisdom remained with me.* But however these Men applaud themselves in their extraordinary Reach and Policy, God in the mean time has another Opinion of their Conduct, and will say to every one of them, what he did to the Rich Man in our Parable, *Thou Fool.*

And now whereas the Judgment of God is ever Infallible, and according to the truth and reality of things, I am hence led in the Second Place to consider the great Folly of what God here condemns as such; the thing condemned, is the Conduct of the Rich Man, which he himself thought Wise, but God thought very Foolish; and the First ground of the Charge wherewith God taxes him, was the *Sinfulness* of it; he was a *Fool*, because a *Sinner*. I shall therefore in the First place reflect a little upon the Folly of Sin in general: Sin and Folly, Sinner and Fool, are Words in Scripture, especially in the Writings of *Solomon*, of a parallel Signification, and are indifferently used one for the other. And the Schools of Morality insinuate the same in that common Aphorism of theirs, *every Sinner is ignorant*, Πᾶς ὁ μοχθηρὸς ἄφρων, says the Socratical Proverb. Indeed Sin has

its

its Birth in Folly, and every Step of its Progress is Folly, and its Conclusion is in Folly; there is its Rise, there is its Advance, and there is its End: But this will appear more distinctly from the consideration of these Two things. First, The absurdity and madness of the Choice which every Sinner makes. Secondly, The Error and Mistake that must necessarily precede in his Judgment before he makes it: These Two things, wherein is comprized the whole Folly of Sin, have been by me already considered elsewhere; but because it is a Consideration of such an uncommon importance, I shall rather present it here again to the Reader with a little Alteration, than refer him to it.

* *Reasonableness of Religion*, pag. 250.

As for the Absurdity of the Sinners Choice, 'tis the greatest that can be imagined; for what is it that he chuses? 'tis to do that which he must and certainly will *repent* of, and wish he had never done, either in this World for its *Illness* and Sinfulness, or in the next for its *sad Effects* and Consequences. 'Tis to despise the Authority, Power, Justice and Goodness of God; 'tis to transgress his Commands which are good and equitable, and in keeping of which there is *present* as well as *future* Reward; 'tis to act against the frame of his Rational Nature, and the Divine Law of his Mind; 'tis

to disturb the Order and Harmony of the Creation, and by extra-lineal motions to violate the Sacred interest of Society: 'Tis lastly, to incur the Anger of an Omnipotent and Just God, and to hazard falling off from his Supream Good and the last end of his Being, and the being ruin'd in his best Interest to all Eternity. All this the Sinner partly actually incurs, and partly puts to the hazard in the Commission of any one Sin. And for what is all tis? Is it for any considerable Interest, for any thing that bears something of Proportion, and may pretend to Competition and a rival weight in the opposite Scale of the Ballance? No, 'tis only for a Shadow, for a Trifle, for the gratification of some baser Appetite, for the acquirement of some little Interest, which has nothing to divert us from adhering to that which is truly our *Best*, but only that poor Advantage of being present, though at the same time its *Vanity* be present with it.

And now is this a Choice for a Wise Man, for a Man of common Sense? Nay, is it a Choice for a Man of any Sense at all, for one in his right Wits to make? Is there a better Demonstration to be had of a Man's being a Fool or Mad than this? No certainly, and were it not for the Customarineſs of the thing, and that too many are concern'd, this would be thought a sufficient Reason

why

why a Man should be *beg'd* for a *Fool*, or sent to *Bedlam*: For if Absurdity of Choice be any Argument of Folly, the Sinner is certainly no common Fool, there being no Choice so absurd, so unaccountable as his.

But his Folly will further appear, if we consider Secondly, the Error and Mistake that must necessarily precede in his Judgment, before he does or can make such a Choice; all Sin is founded upon Ignorance and Mistake, for as 'tis impossible to chuse Evil as Evil in general, so is it no less impossible to chuse any *particular* kind of Evil as Evil; and consequently 'tis impossible to chuse the Evil of *Sin* as such: The Devil himself (as Abstract a Sinner as he is,) can't love Sin as Sin. If therefore it be chosen, it must be chosen under the appearance of Good, and it can have this appearance no otherwise than as considered as a lesser Evil, (for that's the only way whereby an Evil may appear good or eligible, and so it must be considered before it be chosen. He therefore that chuses Sin, considers it at the instant of Commission as a lesser Evil, and therein consists his Error and Mistake; he is either Habitually or Actually Ignorant, he either has not the Habitual Knowledge of all those things which would preserve him in his Duty, or at least he has not the Actual Consideration of them; for 'tis *that*

which must bring him to *Repentance*, there being no Consideration beyond this: And 'tis impossible a Man should Sin with the very same Thoughts, Convictions and Considerations about him, as he has when he *Repents*. This I say is no more possible, than for a Ballance to move Two contrary ways with the same Weight, and in the same Posture. He therefore that Sins, wants *that* Consideration at least to keep him *in* his Duty, which when he Repents brings him *to* it; and is therefore Ignorant and Mistaken.

The Sum of this matter lies in this form of Argument, Whoever thinks Sin a lesser Evil, is mistaken in his Judgment; but whoever commits Sin, does then think it a lesser Evil: Therefore whoever commits Sin is mistaken in his Judgment. So great is the folly of Sin, both in reference to the Absurdity of the Choice, and to the Error and Mistake of the Chuser; and so great reason has every Sinner to take up that Confession of the Psalmist, *Psal.* 73. *So Foolish was I and Ignorant, and even as a Beast before thee.*

And thus far of the Folly of Sin in general; I come now in the Second place to the other ground of the Charge, where I am to consider the folly of placing our Happiness and Content in the good things of this World, and of that particular sort of Earthly-Mindedness which we call *Covetousness*.

It

It is certainly a very great folly to place our Happiness in any *Created* Good, even in the very Best of the Works of God; there is nothing even in *Heaven* that's *Created*, which can be our Happiness; not the Discourses of Angels, not the Love of Seraphins, not the Musick of Alleluiahs. And therefore the Psalmist excludes all the Creatures even in *Heaven*, as well as in Earth from being the Objects of his Happiness; *Psal.* 73. *Whom have I in Heaven but thee?* Says he, 'twould be a great folly therefore to make any Created Good our Happiness, even in the very Region of Blessedness. But then to place it in any good that this World, this Sediment, and Sink of the Creation can afford, is such a degree of Sottishness and Stupidity, as did not Experience convince us that there are such Fools, one would hardly think incident to a Rational Creature; for it plainly argues that we are grosly ignorant of one of these Two things, either of our selves, or of the things of the World; we are either ignorant of the Dignity and Excellency of our Natures, of the Designs and Ends of our Creation, and of the Strengths and Capacities of our Appetites which are to be satisfied with nothing less than Infinite; or if we do know and consider all this of our *selves*, then we are so much the more ignorant of the *World* about us, to think that there is

any thing to be had in this Circle of Vanity to satisfie the importunity of such Hungry and Capacious Appetites.

So far indeed is any thing in this World from being able to afford us *Happiness* and Satisfaction, that 'tis well if it can give us *Entertainment*, and sweeten the otherwise insipid, and to some very bitter Draught of Life: The wisest Enquirer into the Capacities of Nature will hardly allow it so much as that; but says of all here, that 'tis not only *Vanity*, but also *Vexation* of Spirit; and if we do by an extraordinary Fortune meet with any thing in this World that can a little cool and allay the heat of our great Thirst, and refresh the drought of our Spirit, yet we are assured by our Saviour who well understood the World, though he enjoyed but little of it, *Joh.* 4. 13. that *whosoever drinks of this Warter shall thirst again*; and we all find by repeated Experiences, that 'tis so, and our Reason tells us it must be so, considering the vast, the infinite disproportion between the best things of this World, yea of the whole Creation, and the largeness, the immensity of our Appetites and Capacities, which are a plain Demonstration that we were neither made for them, nor they for us, and that here is neither our Good nor our Evil.

And

And what a Folly then is it to place our Happineſs, and take up our Reſt in ſuch things as theſe againſt the Confeſſion and experimental Verdict of the Wiſeſt of Men, againſt the expreſs Declaration and Aſſeveration of God who made both the World and us, and knows the exact Proportion that all his Works have to each other; and that a Barn full of Corn can never ſatisfy the Hunger of a Soul, againſt the united experience of all Men ever ſince *Adam*, nay, and againſt our own Experience too, which will witneſs to us, if we but ask her, that we never *enjoyed* but were *diſappointed*, and found our Souls empty when our Arms were full; nay, and againſt the Anſwer of our Reaſon too, which ſatisfies us of the *Neceſſity* of what our Experience confeſſes to be *true*, and that as it has ever been ſo, ſo it ever will and muſt be ſo: I ſay, what a deſperate, incorrigible Fool muſt he be, who after all this, will yet dream of a Heaven upon Earth, and place his Happineſs in the good of this World! The ſhort is, there is no Folly or Diſappointment like that of being miſtaken in ones *End*, and of all Ends none is ſo fooliſhly miſtaken as our *Laſt* End, and this can never be more fooliſhly miſtaken than when 'tis placed in the things of *this World*. This therefore is a very great inſtance of Folly and Stupidity, and to him that is guilty of

it, whatever he be for Wit and Parts in other Matters of lesser consequence, God justly may, and will say *Thou Fool.*

And now if there be so much of Folly in *Centring* in this World, which consists of great variety of Good, and wherein there is a great *Latitude* of Enjoyment, what a Folly must it then be to straiten our Happiness within the *narrow* compass of *One* or *Two* of its *meanest* Objects, and to set up our Rest in a full Purse, or a full Barn, or in a few Acres of Ground! And this the Covetous Man does; though he be called a *Worldly* Man, yet 'tis not the World at large, but a little of it, and the worst of it that is the Mistress of his Heart: He is such a Fool to think that his very *Life consists* in the Abundance of things which he possesses, and so he makes Gold his Hope, and says to the Fine Gold, *Thou art my Confidence.* He places his End in these things, and so is guilty of all the common Folly and Absurdity of those who place their Happiness in any of the good things of this World; only there is this one peculiar aggravation on his Side, that whereas the Ambitious Man though he makes Honour and Preferment his Happiness, yet he enjoys it when he has it; and so does the Voluptuary by his Pleasures; and by this means though they lose their true End, yet they have something in Exchange. In the

mean time, the *Covetous* Wretch, though he makes Wealth his End, yet he when he has it, enjoys no more than he did when it lay hid in the Bowels of the Earth, and ſo goes to the Devil for *nothing*. For nothing did I ſay? 'Tis worſe than ſo, for though he has nothing of the *Enjoyment*, yet he won't bate himſelf an Ace of the *Trouble*, but endures all the Pain and Anxiety that Careful Days and Sleepleſs Nights can give, and ſo has his Hell here, and hereafter too.

The truth is, there is more Depth and Myſtery in the *Folly* of Covetouſneſs, than in any the moſt profound *Wiſdom* in the World; other Follies of Human Life, though they are not to be *cured* any more than this, yet they may be *accounted* for; and though they do *overpower* and inſlave the Mind, yet they do not *baffle* it. But this is a Diſeaſe that has ſuch variety of uncertain Symptoms, that 'tis hard to know what cauſe to aſcribe it to; the Theory of it is as difficult as the Cure, and we can only ſay, that the Soul is not well under it, that 'tis a *Diſeaſe*. 'Tis Folly enough one would think, for one Man to place his Happineſs in ſuch a Trifle as a piece of glittering Dirt, and to have one's Soul dwell among Sacks of Corn, and Bags of Mony, and to be always craving, heaping, counting and admiring; this I ſay one would think were Nonſenſe enough, conſi-

considering the Vileness of the Treasure it self, the Providence of God, the shortness and uncertainty of Life, the transitoriness of this World, the fashion of which is always passing away; and considering withal the very little that Nature requires for her satisfaction. But yet it were something tolerable if the Wretch would but be perswaded to make use of what he has, and to enjoy like a *Man*, what he desires and admires like a *Fool*. But to see an old *shaking* Miser among his Bags, like a Scare-Crow in a Field of Corn, to keep others away from what he has no power to make use of himself; to see him hovering and brooding over his Heaps, and bringing forth nothing; to see him daily pay *Religious* Visits to his *Mammon*, and to have his Belly empty when his Coffers are full, sure the Philosopher that laught to see an Ass eat Thistles, might well split his Sides at such a Spectacle as this.

Thou Fool! If thou dost not want so much Wealth, why dost thou desire it, and take so much Pains to get it? And if thou dost, why dost thou not use and enjoy it? But this is the monstrous Folly of the Covetous Wretch, he first desires Absurdly, and then is more absurd in not enjoying what he desires; he is every whit as Poor when he has, as when he has not; he is good to no body, but worst of all to himself: In one word,

he

he is a continual Torment to his own Mind, and Laughing-ſtock to the World, whom he diverts with his Folly, the only thing wherein he is a Benefactor.

It were an infinite undertaking to expoſe to view the whole Abſurdity of Covetouſneſs, which is a *World* of *Folly*, as the Tongue is of *Iniquity*; only there is one notorious inſtance of it, which in juſtice to my Subject, I cannot well paſs over: And that is, that it is a Vice of this peculiar Quality from all others, to be then moſt ſtrong and prevailing, when there is leaſt cauſe for it, and leaſt Temptation to it; for then generally are Men moſt Covetous.

1. When they have moſt Wealth.
2. When they have leaſt Time.

1. *When they have moſt Wealth*; this one would think ſhould be the proper Cure of Covetouſneſs, as a full Draught of Water is of Thirſt; for this is what the Covetous Man deſires, this is the Miſtreſs of his Affections, and the delight of his Eyes, that which he has ſo long and ſo paſſionately wiſh'd for, and promiſed himſelf ſo much Happineſs in; and therefore when he is poſſeſſed of this, one would expect that he ſhould be ſatisfied, and at reſt, as other Lovers are when they are come to the enjoyment of their Deſires. But the caſe is ſo far otherwiſe, that he is more deeply plunged in Covetouſ-

neſs

ness now than ever, and is the more *Empty* for being *Full*; and there is nothing more common than to see Men who were of a frank and liberal Disposition when they had little or nothing to support them, to commence Covetous in an instant upon the Bequest of a rich Legacy, or the sudden fall of an Estate. Strange, that Men should *contract* their *Spirits* upon the *enlargement* of their *Fortunes!* Many indeed are the Temptations and Snares of Wealth; but of all Vices one would think it should not dispose Men to covetousness, but rather be an Antidote against it: And yet so it is, Men are generally most inslaved to this Vice, when they have really least Temptation to it, and might most easily be above it, that is, when they have *most Wealth*. Which indeed is a more strange and unaccountable *Appearance* to consider, than either the Attraction of the Loadstone, or the Ebbing and Flowing of the Sea; and yet 'tis as strange to consider, that Men are also most Covetous,

3. *When they have least Time:* Indeed when Men are in the Morning of Life, and have a long Prospect of many Years before them, they have then some Temptation to be Covetous, and something to plead for their being so; for they may then live long enough to *enjoy* what by their Frugality they can get, and considering the many Contin-

gencies

gencies of Human Life, to want what at preſent they enjoy. But when the Day of Life is far ſpent, and the Night is at hand, when a Man has but a ſhort Proſpect before him, and his Sun is juſt ready to touch upon its great *Horizon*, than one would think he ſhould have but little heart to be Covetous; and yet then is the time when Men are moſt of all ſo; for Covetouſneſs is the proper Vice, or rather Diſeaſe of *Old Age*, and is almoſt as conſtant an Attendant of it, as Grey Hairs, or a Trembling Hand. When all other Vices leave the Man, as no longer fit for their Service; when even *Luſt* it ſelf, the laſt of the black Train has bid him adieu, then Covetouſneſs ſeizes him, as if it deſigned to have him wholly to it ſelf, without Partner or Competitor, to domineer over him with an *abſolute* Tyranny. Strange, that a Man ſhould be moſt ſolicitous for Proviſion by the way, when he is almoſt at his Journey's end, within view of Home! *Thou Fool!* If thou muſt be Covetous, take a proper Condition, and a right Time for it, and be ſo either when thou art *Poor*, or when thou art *Young*; when thou haſt a Temptation to it, and a Pretence for it. But it ſeems Abſurdity, and Nonſenſe is ſo far of the very *Eſſence* of this Myſterious Vice, that then Men are moſt addicted to it, when in all Reaſon and Expectation they ſhould be

Proof

Proof against it; nay, one would think even naturally uncapable of it, when they are *Rich*, and when they are *Old*.

And now I think there is sufficient ground for the Charge wherewith God taxes the Rich Man; he might well be called Fool, as a *Sinner*, as an *Earthly-Minded* Person, and particularly as being *Covetous*. But let us now consider the particular circumstances of his Covetousness, and we shall find than his Folly was of a nature very Extraordinary; the Text says, that *the Ground of a certain Rich Man brought forth plentifully*; now 'twould be expected, that upon this, his very next Thought should be to return God Thanks for the Fruitfulness of his ground, if it were for no other Reason, but that he might have the like Success again the next Season: No, but instead of that, he immediately thought within himself what he should do, because he had no room where to bestow his Fruits; there was the first Instance of his Folly. Well, but in case this unseasonable and too early Thoughtfulness of his had but put him upon doing some good thing with his Abundance, 'twould have been pretty tolerable yet, and there would have been some amends for the *ill-timing* it, before he had returned his Thanks to God: No, but he thought *thus* within himself, I will pull down my Barns, and build greater,

and

and there will I beſtow all my Fruits and my Goods: *All* my Fruits and my Goods; he deſigns you ſee to ingroſs all to himſelf, and to remember neither God nor the Poor, to let no part of it go to any Pious or Charitable uſe; and there's another inſtance of his Folly. But after all, perhaps he does not mean to place his *End* and chief Happineſs in his full Granary, but only to uſe it as a *leſſer* good, and as relating to the Conveniencies of the *Body*, and the gratification of the *Animal* Life: No, but his *Folly* proceeds further than ſo, I will ſay to my *Soul*, ſays he, *Soul* thou haſt much Goods laid up for many Years, take thine Eaſe, Eat, Drink, and be Merry: A very noble Soliloquy indeed! That ever a Man ſhould be ſo much a Brute and a Sot, as to make a full Barn the good of his *Soul*! of his *Soul* who muſt ſeek her *Happineſs* from the ſame Hand whence ſhe had her *Being*, and can be ſatisfied only by him who his Abſolute Perfection. This certainly was a ſtrange extravagance of *Folly*, and yet even this has a further Aggravation yet; for had this Proviſion of his been indeed for *many Years*, (as he fancied,) there would have been more Cauſe and Pretence for the great Complacency and Satisfaction he took in it. But little did the poor Fool think upon what Contingencies this Project of his depended, and how precarious and

uncer-

uncertain the Lease of his Life was, much less that *that very Night* his Soul should be required of him; and yet this was a very obvious Consideration, though in the heat and hurry of his Contrivances he was not at leisure to take it in his way. And this is the lamentable Fate of all Covetous Men, they are so busy in making haste to be Rich, that they *overlook* the *Grave*, notwithstanding that they are continually poring upon the *Earth*. But not to consider a thing so obvious, is a great piece of dotishness and stupidity; and yet to consider it, and go on in heaping up Riches without Reason and without End, is much worse.

And thus have we seen the whole procedure of the *Rich Man*, (if he may now be allowed that Name,) and the incomparable Folly of it, and in him the Folly of all Covetous Persons, who yet in one respect, do generall exceed their Original in the Parable, for he, though he had resign'd up his Heart and Soul to his Wealth, yet he was so wise as to know when he had enough, and when 'tis time to give over, retreat, and take his Ease. But *our Misers* never know when they have sufficient, but drudge on to the very last Minute, and Dye in their Slavery; and are therefore the greater Fools.

What therefore remains, but that we take other *Objects* of *Content*; that we place not

not our Happiness in the things of this World, nor labour for that which is not *Bread*; that we lay not up Treasures for our selves upon Earth, but rather endeavour to be Rich towards God; that we do not plunge our selves so deep into the World, and the Pleasures of this Life, this short Life, as to forget the days of Darkness which shall be many? Above all, let us take care that we do not take any thing of the World to be the good of our *Souls*; much less so far as for the sake of any Honour, Profit or Preferment to be false to the infinitely dearer Interest of our Religion, and the Cause of God and his Church; lest when we begin to Pride and Applaud our Selves in our Wisdom, and withal fancy that even Posterity shall praise our Saying, God in the mean time should say to any of us, as he did to the Rich Man in our Parable, *Thou Fool.*

A Discourse concerning the consideration of God, and of the Divine Presence.

Psal. 16. 9. *I have set the Lord always before me.*

AND 'twere Happy we could all do so; we should then certainly be more Pure and Uncorrupt in our Thoughts and Intentions, more Spiritual and Elevated in our Affections, and more Orderly and Regular in our Actions, whether in our Retirements, or upon the open Stage; we should demean our selves with more care and exactness both towards God, our Neighbour and our Selves; we should *lead* our Lives with more Innocence, and *leave* them with more Courage and Chearfulness than we generally do.

The Words, as indeed the whole Psalm, seem immediately to concern the Person and the Condition of Christ, and to be chiefly intended to express that steddy, constant and actual Consideration which he had of the

Power

Power and *Veracity* of God, to whom he was not ſo intimately and myſteriouſly united, but that he endeavoured to be more intimate and familiar with him, and if poſſible, to place him in a nearer view, by the Arts of Attention and Recollection, by the moſt actual and awaken'd Application of Mind. This, as we have great reaſon to think, was his conſtant Practice and Exerciſe all his Life long, but eſpecially about that dark and Cloudy Period of it, when he was entring into the Troubles of his Paſſion; Then he had occaſion to mak uſe of all the Aids and Succours both of Reaſon and Grace; particularly to renew and reinforce his Conſiderations of the Power and Veracity of God, that he would not leave his Soul in Hell, (in the State of Separation from his Body,) nor ſuffer his Holy One to ſee Corruption. Then therefore he ſet himſelf more induſtriouſly to Contemplate the Perfections of God, eſpecially thoſe of his Power and Veracity, and from hence he drew Arguments of Conſolation for his Support, under all the Terrors and Affictions of his great Agony, *I have ſet God always before me; becauſe he is at my Right Hand, I ſhall not be moved.*

But I ſhall diſcourſe upon the Words with greater Latitude, and in treating of them, ſhall concern my ſelf about theſe Two things.

First, To shew what it is to set God always before one; or how many ways we may be said to set God before us.

Secondly, To represent the many and great Advantages arising from each; and what an Excellent Art, and Spiritual Expedient it is for Holy Living, thus to set God always before us.

Now as to the First, to set God always before us, in the general: to have him ever present in our Thoughts and Meditations, under some Capacity or Consideration or other; present to our Thoughts not by way of *Essence* only, (for that he necessarily is, and we cannot possibly exclude him thence,) but also by way of *Object*, when we attend to him, and reflect upon him under some Qualification or other, either absolute, or in relation to us: And in this there is great variety, even as much as there is in the several Attributes and Perfections of God; but I shall consider only those that influence our Practice, and serve to the Direction of our Manners. Now in Relation to this, there are Three very excellent ways of setting God before us, as the *Supream Good*, as a *Pattern*, and as an *Observer*.

First, We may set God before us as the *Supream Good*; this we do when we Contemplate the natural and absolute Perfection of his Essence, that universal Plenitude of his,

whereby he contains all that is Good, Lovely and Excellent, all things that are requisite to the compleating of a most perfect and Sovereign Being, that may be infinitely and unchangably Happy in himself, and whereby he may become apt to be the greatest Good to his Creatures, the true end of Man, the Object of his Happiness, and the last Centre of all his Desires: This is to set God before us as the Supream Good.

Secondly, We may set God before us as a *Pattern*; this we do when we Contemplate the *Moral Nature* of God, those imitable Perfections of his, which answer to those Vertues and good Dispositions of Mind which he requires from us, and which he contributes also to work in us by the Graces of his Spirit: Such are that universal *Sanctity* and Holiness of his Nature and Will, whereby all his Actions become Pure and Right, whereby *the Lord is Righteous in all his Ways, and Holy in all his Works*, Psal. 145. 17. His *Goodness*, wherein are comprehended all the Heights and Depths, and the whole Length and Breadth of the Love, the Kindness, the Mercy, the Grace, the Benignity and Bounty of God, that infinite diffusiveness of his Nature, whereby he is as it were carried out of, and beyond himself, to Communicate the good that is in him to his Creatures, according to their several Proportions and Capa-

cities. His *Justice*, whereby he deals uprightly and equally with all his Creatures, and renders to every one his own, according to their Works, Good or Bad, without any Partiality or respect of Persons. His *Truth*, whereby all his Revelations are exactly correspondent and conformable, First, to his own Mind, and then to the Nature of the things themselves, so that he can neither be deceived, nor deceive. His *Faithfulness*, whereby he most assuredly performs whatever he has Promised or Threatned; but more especially is his Faithfulness remarked in Scripture, for the Performance of his *Promises*, there being a Right acquired from these by the Persons to whom they are made, which is not in Threatnings; and accordingly 'twould be a greater breach of Fidelity, to deny the one, than not to execute the other. And therefore the Scripture commending the Faithfulness of God, restrains it chiefly to his Promises; according to that of the Author to the *Hebrews*, *He is Faithful that Promised*, Heb. 10. 23. Lastly, when we Contemplate his *Sincerity*, which consists in his candid, open and ingennous dealing with the Sons of Men, in that he never thinks nor designs any thing contrary to what he Reveals, either by Word or Deed, in opposition to all Tricks, Juglings, Doubledealings, Hypocrisie and the like.

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These are those Vertues and Perfections which constitute the *Moral* Nature of God, and when we propose these duely and sincerely to our Meditation, as they are Excellencies in the Divine Nature, we may be then said to set God before us as a *Pattern*; I say as they are Excellencies in the Divine Nature, otherwise the formality of the thing will be changed: For if, for instance, I consider the Justice of God, not as tis a Moral Excellence in him, but only as an Instrument of Evil to my self, I do not then set God before me as a *Pattern*, but as an *Avenger*;

The Third and Last way of setting God before us, is as an *Observer*; when we consider him as a Being Essentially present in all Places, and with all Creatures, who all live, move and have their Being in him, and beyond all Places and Creatures too, in those infinite Spaces where he can erect new Worlds, but where as yet there is nothing besides himself. I shall not here enter into a nice Disquisition concerning the *Omnipresence* of God, being willing rather to Suppose than Dispute it. But however, lest this way of setting God before us, should be thought Imaginary and Precarious, give me leave by the way, only to remark, that 'tis every whit as reasonable to think the Essence of God to be *every where*, as to be *always*, and that *Immensity* is as rational as *Eternity*: That Great and Stu-

pendous Being, who is allowed to reach through all *Times*, may as well be allow'd to reach through all *Places*; nay much rather, since it seems to be a less Perfection to be every where, than to be always. For to be always in Duration, is such an Intrinsical Denomination, as springs from the greatest of all God's natural Perfections; for it arises from the necessity of his Existence, whereby he cannot but be, which is the highest degree of Being, as being directly opposite to not Being, and consequently of Perfection. But now to be every where, seems rather an extrinsical Denomination relating to somewhat *without*, and such as is not directly contrary to not Being, but only to limited Being. And if we ascribe the Greater to God, why should there be any Controversy about the Less? Taking therefore the Supposition for granted, we may well consider God as a Being every where Essentially present, and consequently as an All seeing and All-knowing Being, to whom all Hearts are open, and all Desires known, and from whom no Secrets are hid; and not only as an idle Observer, but as one that takes such strict Notice and Cognizance of what he sees and knows, as to treasure and seal it up against the Day of Retribution, and to Punish or Reward us accordingly.

These I take to be the several ways of set-

ting God before us, ſo as to reap any Spiritual advantage from it: I come now in the Second place to repreſent the many and great advantages ariſing from each, and what an excellent Art and Spiritual Expedient it is for Holy Living, thus to ſet God always before us; and truly the advantages are very great; for as the Habitual Knowledge of God, and the Belief of his Exiſtence, are the firſt and general Foundations of all Religion, according to that of the Apoſtle, *He that cometh to God, muſt believe that he is, and that he is a Rewarder of them that diligently ſeek him*: Heb. 11. 6. So the actual Conſideration of him under theſe Capacities, is highly conducive to the Promotion and Accompliſhment of all Holineſs and Vertue.

For Firſt, to begin with thoſe advantages that naturally ſpring from the Conſideration of God as the *Supream Good*, what can be more excellent than the Love of God? 'Tis the higheſt Elevation of a Creature, and withal the moſt pregnant and comprehenſive of all the Virtuous Diſpoſitions he is capable of: 'Tis like the Flower or Bloſſom of a Plant, which contains all in it, and therefore our Saviour calls it the *Firſt and the Great Commandment*, Mat. 22. 38. But now, what more effectual means can there be next to the Grace of him who is Eſſential Love, and who, as the Apoſtle tells us, *ſheds*

the Love of God abroad in our Hearts; Rom. 5. 5. I say, what more effectual means can there be to kindle, increase, and keep alive in us this Heavenly and Divine Fire, than to set God always before us as the Supream Good? Can a Man consider any thing barely as *Good*, and not love it, when Love it self is nothing else but an Inclination of the Soul to Good; He may indeed not proceed to chuse it, because it may come into competition with a greater, which when it does, not the good, but the absence of it is to be Chosen, as being the lesser Evil; but yet notwithstanding, he must still love it with a Natural Love, as long as he considers it as in any degree good. Much less then can a Man refuse to love God, when he considers him not only as Good, but as the *Supream Good*. For here, besides that natural inclination which necessarily follows upon the appearance of Good as Good, there is this peculiar to be considered, that there is no room for Competition with a greater Good, and accordingly that Natural Love and Inclination which is due to God as Good, must needs pass into act and effectual Choice, upon the consideration of his being the *Supream* Good. The last degree of Love or Inclination must needs be actual and effectual, when it has nothing to out-weigh it, as the least Weight weighs down the Scale where there

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is no contrary weight to counterballance and over-rule it. He therefore that ſets God always before him as the ſupream Good, and never thinks of him but under that Notion, muſt neceſſarily and effectually love him, as he that looks upon Sin as the greateſt of all Evils, muſt neceſſarily and effectually hate it: For the Beauties of God are infinitely Charming and Attractive in themſelves, and there wants nothing but our ſerious and due Attention to make them become ſo to us; and the more we apply our Attention to them, the more we ſhall be in love with them. What is it that makes the *Seraphin* burn and flame above the reſt of the Angelical Orders, but becauſe they ſee more of the Firſt and Supream Beauty? Now as Love depends upon *Viſion* in the other Life, ſo does it upon *Contemplation* in this, and conſequently he that conſiders the infinite Perfection of God moſt, muſt neceſſarily love him moſt. Contemplation is the moſt proper and genuine incentive of Love wherever the Object is truly deſerving of it, as diſcovering to us the reaſons why it ought to be loved: I ſay, where the Object is truly deſerving of our Love; for otherwiſe it will ſerve only to diſcover its Vanity, and ſo leſſen its amiableneſs; which is the reaſon that the beſt way to cure our Love to the World, is thoroughly to conſider it. But in

case the Object be a true and real Good, and such as will abide the Test of Meditation, and endure to be weighed and handled on both sides, the proper way to beget and increase our Love toward such an Object as this, is studiously to Contemplate it; and then the Light that is in our Understandings, will beget a warmth in our Wills and Affections. Experience as well as Reason may inform us, that the way to love any thing that is truly good, and will bear a near inspection, is to look much upon it, and consider it thoroughly, since even the most indifferent Objects by long stay and dwelling upon them, do by degrees so gain upon our Affections, that we may come at last to have a kind of a fancy and a kindness for them; and many have gazed and stared upon an ordinary Face so long, till they have entertained a more than ordinary Passion. And if the meanest Beauty of the Creature by frequent and familiar interviews, becomes at length so Lovely and Charming, how much more shall the continual Meditation upon the Beauty of the Creator, kindle in us a Love towards him, and a Delight in him! The longer certainly we sit thus under his Shadow, the more we shall delight to do so, and his Fruit will be the more sweet to our Taste. *Cant.* 2. 3. And if the *general* Consideration of God has such influence upon

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our Love of him, how much ſtronger will that Influence be, when we ſet him before us under the Notion and Capacity of the Supream Good! And therefore when the Pſalmiſt in a deep Contemplation of the Beauties of Chriſt, had proceeded ſo far as to conclude him fairer than the Children of Men; as if wounded to the Heart with the Rays of his Divine Beauty, he preſently adds, *Thy Arrows are very Sharp*, Pſal. 45.

They are indeed Lord Jeſus, they are very Sharp and Keen, like the Sword that proceeds out of thy Mouth; and how is it that we can reſiſt the Power of they Sovereign Beauty! Thou woundeſt the *Seraphim* and *Cherubim*, and all the Orders of Angels with the Arrows of thy Love, and they burn at the Rays of thy Divine Light and Glory: Whom have *they* in Heaven but thee, and what is there on Earth that they deſire in compariſon of thee? But we who are every day vanquiſhed and led in triumph by Meaner Beauties, ſtand yet proof againſt thy Diviner Charms, and feel none of the impreſſions of thy Love. But 'tis our Blindneſs that is our Defence, and our unattention is the Shield that repels thy Darts: We do not Contemplate thee as thy Angels do, nor as we our ſelves do the Beauties of this Senſible World. Oh do thou then open and fix our Eyes upon thee, and they will ſoon

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receive in thy Divine Rays; engage but our Minds to *Contemplate* thee, and then we ſhall not chuſe but *love thee.*

Nor is this the only advantage of ſetting God before us as the Supream Good; for as this is a conſideration of excellent uſe to excite and quicken in us the Love of God, ſo does it alſo Secondly, contribute both to convince us of the Worlds Vanity, and to ſupport us under that Conviction. He that is *not* ſenſible of the vanity of Created Good, had need preſent God to his Thoughts as the Supream Good, that he may have a right ſenſe and apprehenſion of it; and he that *is*, had need Meditate upon God under the ſame Notion, that he may have wherewithal to ſupport his Mind under ſuch a Conviction; and this way of ſetting God before us, is a very effectual means to do both. The Vanity of the Creature never appears with that advantage of clearneſs and conviction, as when we Contemplate the Fullneſs and Excellency of the Creator, which preſently weakens and puts out all the Luſter of the World, as the Sun does that of a Candle, meerly by *out ſhining it.* And when a Man by the help of this Contemplation is arrived to this ſenſe and conviction, the ſame will alſo ſerve to ſupport him under it. 'Tis ſuppoſed here, that the Man will then ſtand in great need of ſome Support or other, and

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that very juſtly; for the Soul of Man being not her own End and Good, muſt needs rely on ſomething *without* for her Happineſs, and as long as ſhe thinks that this may be found among the Creatures, ſhe is pretty well ſatisfied and at eaſe. But no ſooner is ſhe awakened out of this pleaſing Dream, into a Conviction of the World's Vanity, but ſhe has loſt her hold, has nothing to enjoy, nothing to reſt upon; and what a barren diſconſolate condition muſt ſhe be then in, unleſs ſhe has ſome other Refuge to retreat to for her Support? And what other Support *can* there or *need* there be, but the Conſideration of the Divine Fullneſs and Greatneſs, which will make abundant Supply for all the Deficiency that is in the Creature, were it infinitely more vain than it is, and ſo *relieve* that Conviction which it has *occaſioned*.

But Thirdly, This is alſo a general Remedy againſt all other Trouble and Sadneſs, as well as againſt that which ariſes from the Conviction of the World's Vanity; the beſt Conſolation of an Afflicted Mind, is to think upon God, this will chear and refreſh the Soul, when Rational Diſcourſes and Wiſe Sentences are applied in vain; for if your Sorrow proceed from Fear, what more proper relief than to Meditate upon the Power of God, who is able to deliver us from the worſt

worst of Evils? If from Love or Desire, what better allay can be found than to Contemplate the Perfection of God, who is able to satisfy our most Craving Appetites? If from Distrust or Despair, what can we do better than Meditate upon the Goodness and Faithfulness of God, who loves whatever he has made, knows our frame, and considers that we are but Dust? If from the consideration of the ill state of Mankind, either as to Sin or Misery, how can we satisfy ourselves better than by Meditating upon the excellent order and conduct of the Providence of God, who governs the World in a way becoming his infinite Perfections, and disposes all things sweetly? And so in the like manner in all other instances, whatever be the occasion of our Trouble and Sadness, no Consolation like Meditating upon God, and setting him before us: It is so if we think upon him at *large*, but more especially if we contemplate him as the *Supream Good*. This is a more immediate and direct remedy against all Sorrow; for Good is directly contrary to Evil, and the Sense of Good will counterpoise the sense of Evil, if it be an equal good; and if it be a greater, it will overcome and swallow it up, nay and leave some degrees of pure Happiness behind, so that the Man shall rather *enjoy* than *suffer*. But now 'tis impossible for a Man to represent

ſent God to his Thoughts as the Supream Good, as his proper End and Happineſs, without a ſtrong Senſe of his Goodneſs and Perfection; he muſt in a great meaſure *taſte* and *feel* that Good which he Contemplates, and even this Obſcurer Viſion of God is in ſome degree *Beatifick*. And what grief or ſadneſs of Mind then is there which this ſtrong Senſe and Taſte of God will not overcome, and which will not be quite diſſolved, ſwallowed up and loſt in the Contemplation of the Supream good? Upon which Conſiderations well might the Pſalmiſt ſay, *Pſal.* 77. 3. *When I am in Heavineſs, I will think upon God.* He might have thought upon his Royal Greatneſs, and the Pomp and Magnificence of his Court, or upon his Riches, or upon his Friends, or upon his Victories and Triumphs; or if none of thoſe would do, he might have taken his Harp into his Hand, and have driven away the Evil Spirit of Melancholy by Muſick from himſelf, as he did before from *Saul*: But he had a better expedient than all this, *When I am in Heavineſs I will think upon God.*

Nor is this all; for ſhould we not alſo upon the ſtrength of this Conſideration deſpiſe and diſreliſh all thoſe vain Pleaſures which betray us into Sin? Should we not be above the Temptations of either Honour, Pleaſure or Profit? Should we not be ſecure

from that Foolish Exchange which those that pass for the Wisest among us frequently make, I mean that of gaining the World, and losing one's own Soul? Lastly, should we not endeavour by all Means possible to qualify our selves for the blessed Enjoyment of this Supream Good, and in order to that, to cleanse our selves from all Filthiness both of Flesh and Spirit, and to Purify our selves as he is Pure? Yes, we should; the Love of God would easily constrain us to all this, and the serious application of our Minds to the Infinity of the Divine Perfection, would as easily constrain us to the Love of God.

And so much for the advantages of setting God always before us as the *Supream Good*; let us now consider in the Second Place how we may be advantaged by setting him before us as a *Pattern*. We all know and feel the great force and power of *Example*, and how naturally disposed Men are to Imitation, and that we are much the better or the worse for those with whom we Converse: And there is this great difference between *Example* and a *Rule*, that a Rule only directs, but Example does also incline; a Rule instructs the Judgment, but Example moves and reconciles the Affections; the former shews us the right Point to which we are to steer, but the latter supplies us also with Wind and Sail. And there is no reason

ſon to doubt, but that the Example of God would be as prevailing with us, as any other, and much more, (as being of infinitely greater Authority,) if we did but equally propoſe him to our imitation, and ſet him before us as a Pattern. Can then a Man conſider the Univerſal *Sanctity* of the Divine Nature, and not find himſelf ſtrongly inclined to work over anew the defaced Image of his Creator, and to be Holy as he is Holy? St. *John* aſſigns this for a Reaſon why we ſhall be like God hereafter, becauſe we ſhall ſee him as he is; *We ſhall be like him*, ſays he, *for we ſhall ſee him as he is*. And if the clear and open Vition of God will ſo far aſſimilate us as to make us perfectly conformable to him, certainly the Contemplation of his Moral Perfections, though through a Glaſs darkly, muſt needs inſpire us with Deſires and Endeavours to be like him. Is it then poſſible for a Man ſeriouſly and conſtantly to contemplate the infinite *Love*, Bounty and Goodneſs of God, and either be ungrateful to *him*, or uncharitable to his *Neighbour*, to be ſelfiſh and ſtrait-laced, niggardly and covetous, reſerved and uncommunicative? Much leſs can he be envious and ſpiteful, cruel and unmerciful, and delight in Barbarity and doing Miſchief; it would be a Miracle if he ſhould. The Pſalmiſt thought it ſo, and therefore ſays he,

Pſal. 52. 1. *Why Boaſteſt thou thy ſelf thou Tyrant, that thou canſt do Miſchief, whereas the Goodneſs of God endureth yet daily?* He thought it ſtrange that any Man ſhould value himſelf for being able to do Miſchief, when God thought it his Glory to do Good: He might have reproved his Folly and Wickedneſs from the very nature of the thing, by laying open the great unreaſonableneſs of it, but he choſe rather to convince him of the ſtrangeneſs and abſurdity of ſuch a temper, from the Conſideration of the *Divine Goodneſs.*

Which before I leave, I ſhall mention one more very excellent advantage which it has in the Practice of Religion, in that it is apt to remove from us all ſerviſe fear, and to inſpirit us with a generous and ingenuous Principle of ſerving God. For all Slaviſh and Superſtitious Fears of God proceed from a wrong Notion of him; we Fear him, and are Jealous of him, becauſe we miſapprehend him; and we miſapprehend him, becauſe we do not ſufficiently contemplate him. The way therefore to be afraid of him leſs, is to be more Converſant, and better acquainted with him. When the Diſciples ſaw Jeſus walking upon the Sea, and knew not who it was, they were ſcared with the Appearance; and therefore our Lord to take off their Fear, only made himſelf better known

known to them. *It is I*, ſays he, *be not afraid*. 'Twas enough to diſmiſs their Fears to let them know who he was. Nor need we at any time any other Remedy againſt ſervile Apprehenſions, and diſingenuous Fears of God, than barely to contemplate the Goodneſs and Benignity of his Nature, expreſſed in thoſe two Emphatical Deſcriptions given of him in Scripture, *God is Love*, and *God is Light*.

And thus 'twere eaſie to give inſtances throughout all the other Moral Perfections of God; but I ſhall inſiſt only upon one more, as being more particularly fit and uſeful to be conſidered in the Age we now live in. Can then a Men duly contemplate the *Truth* and *Sincerity* of God, how candid, open and ingenuous he is in his dealings with the Sons of Men, and how far removed from all Tricks, Juggles and Deceits, and that he can no more deceive, than he can be deceived? Can a Man I ſay conſider this, conſider it well, and be a *Hypocrite*? And that not only in an inſtance or two, but in a long ſeries of Action; not only for a few Hours or Days, but for a courſe of ſeveral Years; not only in the common concerns of Life, but in the moſt ſacred of all things, and where we owe the greateſt Plainneſs and Sincerity both to God and Man, *Religion*? Is Charity it ſelf able to believe that ſuch a

Mysterious Intricate Sinner as this, has made the Sincerity and Truth of God any part of his Meditations? No, I fear if the truth were known, such a one would be too much concerned in that Charge, wherewith the Psalmist taxes the Proud Man, that *God is not in all his Thoughts*, Psal. 10. that he does not think of him at all, or else that he has a wrong Notion of him, and takes him to be altogether such a one as himself: But let such a one know, that God will reprove him, and set before him the things which he has done; for God does not only give us a Pattern of Truth and Sincerity, but does also strictly observe whether we follow it or no: Which leads me to consider in the last place the advantage of setting God always before us as an *Observer*.

'Tis most certain whether we will consider it or no, that God is every where Essentially and Substantially Present, and that as there is no Place that *includes* him, so there is none that *excludes* him; a notion of God so very natural, that even the *Jews* as gross and unmetaphysical as they were, could not but embrace it. Which was the occasion of that Custom of theirs in their Sacrifices, (taken notice of by Dr. *Outram* out of *Maimonides*,) of waving the Victim towards the Six Parts of the World, upwards and down-

De Sacrificiis. Lib. 1. Pag. 162.

downwards, East, West, North and South, whereby to express the Consecration of the Sacrifice to God as every where Present, and and possessing all Places.

'Tis also most certain, whether we will consider it or no, that God sees and knows all things, and that (as the Author to the *Hebrews* expresses it, *Heb.* 4. 13.) there is no Creature that is not manifest in his Sight, and that all things are naked and open to the Eyes of him with whom we have to do. This we have most magnificently described by the Psalmist in the 139 Psalm, *O Lord thou hast searched me out, and known me; thou knowest my down-sitting and mine up-rising, thou understandest my Thoughts long before. Thou art about my Path, and about my Bed, and spiest all my ways: For lo there is not a word in my Tongue, but thou O Lord knowest altogether.* And again, *whither shall I go then from thy Spirit, or whither shall I go then from thy Presence? If I climb up into Heaven, thou art there, if I go down to Hell thou art there also. If I take the Wings of the Morning, and remain in the uttermost parts of the Sea, even there also shall thy Hand lead me, and thy right Hand shall hold me. If I say peradventure the Darkness shall cover me, then shall my Night be turned into Day. Yea, the Darkness is no Darkness with thee, but the*

Night is as clear as the Day, the Darkneſs and Light to thee are both alike.

Why now this we all know, and if formally put to the Queſtion, ſhall be ready to confeſs it; for I am willing to ſuppoſe, that there are ſcarce any that are either Ignorant, or Impudent enough to ſay with the Atheiſtical Perſon in *Job*, *How does God know, can he judge through the dark Cloud? Thick Clouds are a Covering to him that he ſees not, and he walketh in the Circuit of Heaven*, Job 22. 13. No, we know the contrary well enough, that God is preſent ever where, and ſees and knows every thing, but the Miſery of it is we don't conſider it; and 'tis for want of actually thinking upon what we habitually know that the World is ruined. 'Tis this that makes ſo great a difference between the Behaviour and Converſation of one Man and another. All believe Omnipreſence and Omniſcience to be Perfections belonging to the infiniteneſs of the Divine Eſſence; but one maintains actual Thoughts and Recollections of this, and another does not; one has it lying dormant in him, as a general Notion or Theory, which he can talk and diſcourſe of now and then when occaſion is offered, and the other has it always actually preſent before him in its full Light and Conviction. Whence it comes to paſs, that though both agree in the general belief

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of the Article, yet becauſe one attends to it, and the other does not, the way of their Converſation is altogether different, and one lives as an *Angel*, and the other as a *Devil*.

For indeed were this one Conſideration ſufficiently heeded and attended to, it were enough of it ſelf to regulate the conduct of Mens Actions, and to reduce the whole World into a truer order and exactneſs of Living. There are indeed many excellent Methods of obtaining Vertuous and Religious Diſpoſitions of Mind, and of Improvement in them, but none that I can think of ſo advantagious as this: That which comes neareſt to it, is the *Meditation* of *Death*; but indeed this comes too near to be reckoned as another, it being rather a further inſtance and improvement of the ſame. For the Meditation of Death is only ſo far influential upon our Lives, as 'tis a nearer and ſtricter way of conſidering the *Divine Preſence*, before which we ſhall be more immediately preſented by Death. So that the Meditation of Death, (as far as it has any influence upon good Living,) is comprehended under the Conſideration of the Divine Preſence, as a Particular under a General; as indeed whatever is good in any other method of Holy Living, is after a manner Comprehended in this, which of all others is the moſt Comprehenſive and Compendi-

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ous. Which was the ground of that Admonition of God to *Abraham*, *I am the Almighty God, walk before me, and be thou perfect*: Gen. 17. Where he supposes such a Connexion between the constant Attention to the Divine Presence and Perfection, that to attain the later, a Man need only practice the former. God in giving *Abraham* this Direction for a Holy and a Perfect Life, gave him all; for this single Exercise of Meditating upon the Presence of God, will either incline a Man both to the Desire and to the Practice of all other Spiritual methods and helps of Holy Living, or else it will supply the room of them. So that if a Man who desires to advance in Spiritual Life, should happen to forget any of the other methods of the Spirit, let him only remember this one, and duly use and exercise it, and he shall either by this bring the rest to his Mind, or find no necessity of so doing. This therefore may well be reckoned as the Head and Chief of all Spiritual Exercises; for indeed this one Exercise draws such a train of advantages after it, as by the assistance of Divine Grace will be sufficient to perfect the man of God, and compleat the Christian.

But to be a little more distinct, the advantagiousness of this Practice may appear in a double respect.

First,

First, As it is a general Countercharm againſt all Sin.

Secondly, As it is a general Incitement to all that is good.

First, *It is a general Counter-charm againſt all Sin*; for as Sin in its formality is an Averſion from God, ſo the cauſe of all Sin does at laſt reſolve into Forgetfulneſs of him, and a Non conſideration of his Preſence and Inſpection: There is an Averſion from him in our Underſtandings, before there is any in our Wills, and the later is the effect of the former. The Scripture repreſents *Cain* as *going out from the Preſence of God*, Gen 4. 16. after he had ſinned; but 'tis as true alſo that he went out *before*; for had he not firſt caſt off the thoughts of Gods Preſence, 'tis impoſſible that he ſhould have ſinned. And the ſame may truly be ſaid of all other Sinners, they firſt depart from God in their Thoughts, and then in their Actions: firſt forget *his Preſence*, and then their *own Duty*: For can we conceive any Man ſo ſtupid and hardy as to commit Sin, when at the ſame time he actually reflects upon a Being of Infinite Holineſs, Power and Juſtice, looking upon him, and upon what he does? Could we ſuppoſe God to appear viſibly to us when we were in Private, this we muſt needs grant would ſtrike us with Serious and Reverent Apprehenſions, and that we ſhould

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ſtand in awe, and not Sin, though in the very heat and full Career of a Temptation. And why ſhould not *God's ſeeing us*, have the ſame Influence upon us, as *Our ſeeing God*? Without queſtion it would, and a great deal more, if we had but the ſame lively ſenſe of it, and were equally awake and attentive to it; for we ſee that infinitely leſs than this will reſtrain us from Sin; the Eye of the World, nay of one ſingle Perſon, though an Inferior, though a Slave, though a Fool, though a Child: Nay, even the very Eye of the *Sun*, which very often puts the Sinner out of Countenance, and makes him defer his Folly till the Shades of Night. And ſhall not the Preſence of the Great God be as prevalent with us as any of theſe, eſpecially conſidering that no Creature can be ſo inwardly preſent with us as the Creator is, and that no Obſervation is of ſuch Importance and Conſequence as his? Shall not then his Preſence and Inſpection be as a Preſervative againſt Sin, as the Preſence of a Man? Without doubt it would, and infinitely more, did we but equally conſider it; it would then ſecure us not only from *Sin*, but even from *Temptation* too, and keep us *out* of *Danger* as well as *in Innocence*. For how can he be tempted to Sin, who dwells always in the Preſence of his Creator and Judge? Why are the Angels and the Souls

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of Juſt Men made Perfect, ſecure from the danger of Sinning, but only becauſe they are always in the open Preſence of God, and dwell in the Light of his Countenance? This is their great Preſervative *above*, and the ſame if well attended to, would be a Preſervative to us *below*. The Perſeverance of the Angels in Heaven is owing to their always beholding the Preſence of God there; and if we could do the ſame here in proportion, that is, if our *Contemplation* were but as actual, ſteddy, and uninterrupted as their *Viſion*, we ſhould be as Confirmed and Eſtabliſhed as they. In ſhort, notwithſtanding the great Corruption of our Nature, and our Proneneſs to Evil, we need no other Guard, either againſt Sin, or againſt Temptation, than theſe Three Words well conſidered, *God is Preſent*.

But there is One particuar Sin to which this Conſideration is utterly irreconcilable, and againſt which it is a peculiar Antidote, and that is the Sin of *Hypocriſie*; this is a Sin which of all others proceeds moſt upon the Suppoſition of God's not being privy to our Thoughts and Intentions, and his not having a thorough Comprehenſive Knowlede of all things: As the Fool ſays in his Heart there is no God, ſo the Hypocrite ſays in his Heart, that if there be, yet he is no Obſerver, as being neither Omnipreſent, nor Omni-

Omniſcient? Which Attributes of God whoever ſeriouſly Contemplates, muſt needs have his Antidote againſt this Vice. For to what purpoſe ſhould a Man play the *Hypocrite* before him, who can diſcern the Fraud and Rottenneſs of the Proud Phariſee under his *broad Phylactery*, and the ravenous Covetouſneſs of the Preciſe Sectary under his *long Prayer*? No, as the Hypocrite takes care to avoid open Immoralities, becauſe they are viſible to the Eye of the *World*; ſo, had he a due Senſe of the Divine Preſence and Obſervation, he would be every whit as careful to be without all inward Impurities, becauſe they are viſible to the Eye of *God*. But

Secondly, *This Practice is alſo a general Incitement to all that is good*: As the Suppoſition of Gods Omnipreſence and Omniſcience is the Foundation of all Religion; (for to what purpoſe ſhould we make Religious Addreſſes to a Being that is either afar off, or unconſcious of our Behaviour towards him,) ſo the conſtant and actual Impreſſion of it, would greatly promote the Practice of all Religion, *Walk before me, and be thou Perfect*: How can he be Perfect that does not walk with and before God, and how can he be otherwiſe that does? The actual Thoughts of the preſence of God is the very Life and Spirit of all Religion, without which,

which, we ſhould be quickly weary of Well-doing, and with which, we ſhall be ſo far from flagging in our Duty, that we ſhall be always endeavouring to do better and better, that ſo we may the more approve our Selves and our Actions to our All-preſent and All-ſeeing Judge. This was the Principle into which *David* reſolved all the Perfection and Integrity of his Obedience, that he acted as in the Sight and Preſence of his Judge. *I have kept thy Commandments and Teſtimonies, for all my Ways are before thee*, Pſal. 119. And no doubt if we acted by the ſame Principle, we ſhould live with the ſame exactneſs; if we lived under a conſtant ſenſe of the Preſence of God as he did, we ſhould alſo with him have reſpect to all his Commandments. When the Glorious Preſence of God appeared to the *Iſraelities* upon *Mount Sinai*, we find that they were ſo ſenſibly affected with that terrible Sight, as to take up earneſt Reſolutions of Obedience: for *all the People anſwered* Moſes, reporting the Words of God to them, *with one Voice, and ſaid, All the Words which the Lord hath ſaid will we do.* And as long as this Preſence of God continued, we don't find but that they were very Orderly and Obedient, and contained themſelves within thoſe Boundaries which *Moſes* by Divine Order had ſet about the Mount: And there is no queſtion to be made,

made, but that if they could ſtill have maintained a freſh and lively Idea of this great Preſence in their Minds, they would alſo have retained the ſame obedient Temper of Spirit, and would have contained themſelves within all *other* Bounds of God's ſetting, as well as thoſe of *Mount Sinai*; their Heart would have been whole with him, and they would have continued ſtedfaſt in his Covenant. We may therefore, and without Cenſure conclude, that thoſe who take liberty to break through the Bounds which God has ſet, by tranſgreſſing thoſe excellent Laws which he has given for the good Order and happy Being of Mankind, are not duly ſenſible of the Divine Preſence and Obſervation: They may know it indeed Habitually as a meer Point of Speculation, but they do not actually weigh and conſider it, and have reaſon to ſay in the Words of the Patriarch when awakened from Sleep, *Surely God was in this Place, and I knew it not*, Gen. 28.

And now ſince the Spiritual Advantages of ſetting God always before us are ſo great and ſo many, I think I need uſe no other Perſwaſive to recommend this excellent Expedient of Holy Living to our conſtant Practice: In all other things we love the moſt Compendious Methods, and to make uſe of ſuch Means as lead moſt directly and by the

the ſhorteſt Line to the End we aim at. And why ſhould we not follow the ſame Method in the Practice of a Religious Life, the difficulcy and conſequence of which is enough to engage us to ſeek out for the beſt and moſt forwarding Aſſiſtances? Now this certainly of all others will deſerve that Character, being the moſt general Inſtrument of Perfection, and conſequently the moſt Compendious way to it. Let us then be perſuaded to make uſe of it, by ſetting God always before us, and having him always in our Thoughts, eſpecially under this Threefold Conſideration, as the *Supream Good*, as a *Pattern*, and as an *Obſerver*; ſo ſhall we have a perpetual incouragement to do well, and a ſufficient Counterpoiſe againſt all Temptations. And God grant we may ſo ſet him always before us here, that we may not be afraid to appear before him hereafter. *Amen.*

A Discourse concerning the doing God's Will on Earth, as it is in Heaven.

Mat. 6. 10. *Thy Will be done in Earth, as it is in Heaven.*

SO our Blessed Lord bids us to Pray, who came to be the Promoter of *Holiness*, as well as to be the Author of our *Faith*, and to Reform the World as well as to Redeem it. Now as 'tis the Perfection of the Natural World to be Conformable to the *Understanding* of God, those Immutable Ideal Representations which are in the Divine Mind, so is it the Perfection of the Moral World to be Conformable to his *Will*; and in both these, the Second Person of the Sacred Trinity, the Eternal *Word*, St. *John* tells us, that *all things were made by him*, or according to him, δι αὐτοῦ, *and without him was not any thing made that was made.* And St. *Paul*, 1 Col. 16. 17. that *by him were all things Created that are in Heaven, and that are in Earth*; and

that *by him all things consist*. Again 'tis said, *Heb.* 1. 2, 10. *by whom also he made the Worlds*. And again, *Thou, Lord in the beginning hast laid the Foundation of the Earth, and the Heavens are the Works of thy Hands.*

Then as to the perfecting the frame of the *Moral* World, as 'twas his Meat and Drink to do the Will of his Father himself, so was it his principal business, and the Main of his Undertaking, to repair the Ruins of Morality, to inlarge the Bounds of his Fathers Kingdom, to make others conformable to the Divine Will, and Partakers of the Divine Nature; which in part has already taken effect, and of which (as we are told,) we are yet to expect a further Accomplishment under his glorious Millennial Reign, when Righteousness shall flourish and be exalted, and the Will of God be done on Earth to a very near degree as it is in Heaven.

To this end serves the great Mystery of Goodness, that Grace of God which has appeared to the World, teaching us, 2 *Tit.* 11. that denying Ungodliness and Worldly Lusts, we should live Soberly, Righteously and Godlily in this present World; the Covenant of Grace being so ordered and contrived, that our Duty is secured, as well as our Infirmity and Necessity relieved, and our Repentance is only made effectual by the satisfaction of Christ, not unnecessary.

To this End he gave us a new Syſtem of Chriſtian Morals, which though no addition to the Eternal Law of Nature and right Reaſon, was yet a great Improvement of that of *Moſes*. And he took care alſo to ſecond his excellent Precepts, by as excellent an Example, that they might appear to be Practicable as well as Reaſonable.

And here becauſe Example has the greater Influence of the Two, he not only gave us an abſolute one of his own, and exhorted us to the imitation of it, when he ſaid, *Learn of me*, but alſo remits us to the excellent Example of the Angels, thoſe ready Performers of God's Will, and winged Miniſters of his Pleaſure, in that he bids us Pray, *Thy Will be done in Earth, as it is in Heaven.*

That God's Will is done in Heaven, is here ſuppoſed; we are therefore further concerned only to inquire.

1. Of what Will of God our Lord is to be here underſtood?

2. By whom it is done in Heaven?

3. After what manner it is there done?

4. How far we are concerned to imitate this great Pattern of Obedience?

5. How reaſonable it is for us to do ſo?

And Friſt by *Will*; here our Lord cannot be ſuppoſed to mean that which is a Faculty in the Divine Eſſence, or rather the very Eſſence it ſelf; for how may we Pray that

that

that should be done, which Eternally and Necessarily is? Neither by Will here are we to understand the Act of Willing, for this can no more properly be said to be *done* than the other; but that Will, for the doing of which we here Pray, is the *Res Volita*, or the Object of the Divine Will: But then this is Two fold, either the Object of his Will Decreeing, or the Object of his Will Commanding; or to word it according to the ordinary distinction, the Will of his Decrees, or the Will of his Commands: and 'tis generally held that both these are to be here understood.

But I must confess it does not appear to me how the Will of God's Decrees can be at all here concerned, any further than as our Submission to it is a part of the Will of his Commands; for not to insist upon the necessary and uncontroulable accomplishment of God's Decrees, and that things necessary and certain are not so proper Objects of Prayer, I only observe that this Will of God is here desired to be done in Earth as it is in Heaven; which supposes it to be more perfectly performed in the one than in the other; the latter being proposed as a Pattern and Precedent to the former. But now, as God is in all Places equally Almighty, so are his Decrees in all Places alike performed in Earth as well as in Heaven, according to

that of the Psalmist, *Psal.* 135. *Whatsoever the Lord pleased, that did he in Heaven and in Earth, and in the Sea, and in all deep Places*; this therefore cannot be meant of the Will of Gods Decrees, any further than as 'tis a part of the Will of his Commands that we should submit to them, and acquiesce in them. Neither indeed can this be directly and strictly intended, but only by way of *Proportion*, that as the whole Will of God, which is capable of being done in Heaven is there done; so all that is capable of being done on Earth, should in like manner be there done. But I say it cannot be directly intended, there being no Afflictive Dispensations of Providence incident to those who do God's Will in Heaven, and consequenly no room for the Exercise of Patience and Submission; as will further appear by considering the Second Inquiry, namely, by whom it is that this Will of God is done in Heaven.

And this indeed is of no great Difficulty to resolve, since the nature of the Will does of it self point out to the Doers of it; for it being the Will of God's *Commands*, it can no more be done by God, than 'tis possible for God to obey himself. Nor can it be done by the Celestial Bodies; for however these in a large and improper sense are sometimes said to obey God, as when the Psalmist says, that

that the Heavens declare the Glory of God, and the Firmament ſheweth his Handy-work; and that Wind and Storm fulfil his Word, and the like: Yet being neceſſary Agents, they cannot yield any Moral and Acceptable Obedience; much leſs in ſuch an eminent and exemplary manner as to be a Pattern to us, which yet is here ſuppoſed. And yet they will be every whit as capable of this Obedience, as we are, if we be not *free Agents*; which by the way I leave to be conſidered by thoſe who deny that Priviledge to Human Nature. It remains therefore, that the Holy Angels are they that do this Will of God in Heaven; none elſe are capable of doing it, and of theſe the Pſalmiſt ſays expreſly, that *they fulfil his Commandment, and hearken to the Voice of his Word*, Pſal. 103.

Proceed we therefore to the next Inquiry, namely, after what manner this Will of God is done by the Holy Angels in Heaven; that they do it after a very perfect and excellent manner, far exceeding the higheſt Meaſures of Mortality, is here implied, in that they are propoſed and commended to us as Patterns, and might be further concluded from the Perfection of their Natures and Faculties, which we cannot but ſuppoſe to be very extraordinary, ſince the excellency of our future Condition is ſumm'd

up in this short Description, that we shall be *like unto the Angels*, Luk. 20. 36.

But waving this Consideration taken from the Powers and Faculties of Angels as somewhat too Nice and Metaphysical for a Practical Discourse, I shall chuse rather to represent the great Excellency wherewith they perform the Will of God from Two Collaterial Considerations.

First, The Impediments they are free from.

Secondly, The positive Advantages they enjoy.

And First, as to the Impediments they are free from: 'Tis the great disadvantage of all Humane Spirits in this Station, as well as the Complaint of some, that they are united with Bodies that are not proportioned to the Native Excellency and Activity of their Natures; for indeed the Soul has made an ill Match, Married very much beneath her self, and has met with a Clog instead of a Companion; one that is too weak to obey her Dictates and Motions, and too strong to be governed; that cannot follw, and that will not be lead; that sticks too close to her to be shaken off, and yet is too loose from her to be well managed: Such an untractable ill suited Consort as this must needs be a stant incumbrance to the Soul, even in her Natural, but much more in her Moral and Spiri-

Spiritual Operations, because here the Consort has contrary Inclinations; so that the Soul is put to incounter not only with her ordinary weight, but with an Opposite Law, even the *Law* of the *Members* which wars against the Law of the Mind, and brings us into Captivity to the Law of Sin, *Rom.* 7. 23.

Neither is this all, for we are not only cumbered with a weight of Flesh, and depressed by its low tendencies and propensions; but our Body which at best is but in an ill disposition for the Operations of the Rational and Divine Life, is often discomposed and made worse by *Sickness*, and then the Soul is forced to sympathize and condole with her ill-suited Companion, and either not to act at all, or to perform her Part upon an ill-tuned Instrument: And he that is blessed with the strongest and most tunable Constitution, and enjoys the most vigorous Health, has yet a great many necessities of Nature to serve, that will take up much of his Thoughts and much of his Time; so that he can't chuse but be *troubled about many things*, things below the concernment of a Rational Being, and that, though he has chosen the *Better Part*, and is so well convinced of his true Interest, as to acknowledge only *one thing* to be *needful*.

Add to all this, that we breath in an infected Air, live in an ill World, where every Object

jest almost is a Temptation, and have a Devil to tempt and seduce us; one who makes it his proper and profest business to cross the Ends of God, to disturb the Moral Harmony of the Universe, and to hinder the symphony and agreement of the Two Worlds, that so God's Will may not be done in Earth, as it is in Heaven; And with these disadvantages no wonder that it is not.

But now the Holy Angels have none of these impediments; they have either no Bodies, or such as no way incommode or retard, but rather help and further their Faculties; for they are in the full height and last perfection of their Natures, and consequently must not be supposed to have the least degree of any of their Natural Perfections detained or held back from exerting it self by any Clog or Impediment, there being no reason imaginable why they should be invested with any degree of Power which must never be brought into Act, as it never must be if not at present, they being now supposed to be in the last Perfection of their Natures. They must be therefore conceived in this respect, to act like *necessary Agents* to the *full*, and to the *utmost* of their natural Strength, and to have nothing in them that is not put forth as far as possibly can be. And besides, the Scripture always speaks of them

them under the denomination of *Spirits*, without making mention of any Bodies belonging to them; which must needs imply, that either they are all Pure Minds, (as the *Platonists* say of the highest Order,) or if they have Bodies, they are of so refined and clarified a Mould, so nigh to an Immaterial Substance, that *Spirit* might serve as a common word for both. They have therefore no weight or load upon their Faculties, nothing to dead or slacken the *Spring* of their Nature, no Concupiscence to darken their Understandings, or to pervert their Wills, no Indisposition, Languor or Weariness occasioned through crazy and sickly Vehicles, but are always Fresh, Vigorous and Bright, like the life and quickness of the Morning, and rejoyce like the Sun to run their Course. They have no Necessities to relieve or provide for, no impertinent Avocations to call them off from their noble Exercises, no ill Company to debauch them, no Devil to tempt and insnare them, and therefore must needs act with a full display of their Faculties, and be carried out unceasantly and intirely toward the Supream Good, with their whole bent and energy, as a Stone would tend toward the Center through an *unresisting* Medium.

But this will further appear by considering Secondly the positive advantages which they enjoy:

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enjoy: Their great advantage is, that they have a constant and clear Vision of the Essence of the great God. Now I consider that the Essence of God is the very Essence of Goodness, ὐσία τῦ ἀγαθῦ, as the Divine Philosopher fitly calls him; whereupon I conceive that an Angel seeing God after this Essential manner, must have the same Habitude and Disposition to him, as one that does not thus see God has to the common Nature of Good. But now 'tis impossible that a Man should either will or act any thing without attending to good in common, and without proposing that as his aim: And accordingly 'tis as impossible that the Blessed Angels should will or act any thing without attending to God, and making him their End as long as thay have this Essential Vision of him; and of this they are never deprived, for our Lord says of them, that they always behold the Face of his Fa- which is in Heaven, *Mat.* 18. 10. This he speaks of the *Missionary* Angels that have the Charge and Office of Guardians here upon Earth, that even *they* notwithstanding their Imployment here, have a consistent view of the Divine Essence, and are never interrupted in their Beatifick Vision; much more then is this true of the *Stationary* Angels that wait upon the Throne of God, the *Residentiaries* of Heaven. Whence it further follows,

follows, that 'tis impoſſible they ſhould ever *Sin*, or do any thing contrary to the Divine Nature or Will. For the Eſſence of God being ſuppoſed to be the ſame to them that good in general is to us, the Viſion of it muſt needs wholly ingage and conſtantly retain all their Powers and Faculties; (for we can never will any thing out of the Sphere of Good in general,) communicate a kink of Deiform Habit to their Natures, and render them in all things exactly conformable to the Divine Will. And accordingly the Apoſtle derives our future likeneſs and conformity to God from our Viſion of him; *We ſhall be like him*, ſays he, *for we ſhall ſee as he is*, Joh. 3. 2.

This ſhall be our Felicity hereafter; but it is the Priviledge of the Bleſſed Angels to enjoy it now, and therefore by the ſtrength of the ſame Argument it muſt be ſuppoſed that they are as like God as the cleareſt Viſion of him can make them; that is, as like him as finite can be like infinite, as a Creature can be like its Creator. That they are exactly conformable to the Perfections of that Adorable Excellence which they behold, that they love what he loves, and hate what he hates, and that in all things they perform his Will and Pleaſure in a more excellent manner than ſuch imperfect *Thinkers* as we are, can either conceive or deſcribe.

Thus

Thus in general; but now for a more particular account of the excellent manner of their Doing the Will of God in Heaven, we are to consider,

First, That they do it with full *Readiness* and *Alacrity*: 'Tis the necessary as well as unhappy Appendage of our Mortal frame, even in its best condition, to act with a mix'd Consent and a divided Choice: Sin indeed we sometimes do with a full and thorough Consent, without any renitencies to the contrary side; but our resolutions to Good are mixt and imperfect; for the most part we do not go so far, but 'tis our highest Atchievement to conquer and prevail against the tendencies of the Animal part, not to be without them. And though after some uncertain Vibrations, the Scale does at length weigh down for Duty and Obedience, yet still there is some weight in the other Ballance, and the Motion though Victorious, yet is not intire and unresisted. But now the Holy Angels being free from the Impediments of a contrary Principle, perform the Will of God with a full, intire and perfect Consent; they have no Demurs, or Disputings, no Reluctancies or Aversions, but at the first intimation approve and execute the Will of God with all the readiness and alacrity of an intire, pure and undivided Will. And accordingly in the Prophet *Isaiah*'s Vision

sion of God in his Glory, the Seraphim appeared with Six Wings, *Isa.* 6. 2. *With twain he covered his Face,* (the Text says,) *with twain he covered his Feet, and with twain he did fly.* But to the Prophet *Ezekiel*, Ezek. 10. the Vision was inlarged, for to him the Cherubims were represented with Wings and Wheels, both of them being very significant and lively Symbols of that eminent Alacrity and Agility wherewith the Holy Angels perform the Will of God.

The *Jews* indeed have a Proverb, *That the* Angel *of* Justice *flies but with one Wing*; but hereby I conceive they intend only the slowness of God in issuing out Commissions of Vengeance, not that of the Angels in putting them in Execution: For they see the *Reason* of the Command as well as the *Letter* of it; or if not, yet the clear Vision they have of the Divine Essence and Perfections, will not suffer them to doubt of the Equity and Reasonableness of all his Injunctions, as being well assured that nothing but what is highly Reasonable can be the result of Infinite Wisdom and Goodness: So that they are as well satisfied with the Decrees of Vengeance, as with the milder Emanations of his Love, and perform them both with equal Chearfulness. Thus we see the Angel who was Commissioned to keep laps'd Man out of Paradise with his Flaming Sword, betook himself

himself as readily to the ungrateful Office, as he that was to carry the welcom Tidings of Man's Redemption to the Shepherds, and to sing Glory to God on high, on Earth Peace and Good Will towards Men. And I question not but that those Sons of God which shouted for Joy at the laying the Foundations of this great Fabrick, will hereafter upon the Signal given, be full as ready to assist to its Destruction and Fiery Dissolution. But we are upon the same Grounds to consider,

Secondly, That their Obedience is *Uniform* and *Universal* as well as ready and chearful, and that they have an equal respect to all the Commands of God. Upon the same Principle that they are Ready and Chearful, they are also Uniform and Universal in their Obedience; for the reason why they Obey chearfully, is either because they are Convinced of the particular Equity and Reasonableness of the Law, or because they are convinced of the unerring Wisdom of the Law-giver, whom they know they may safely rely upon by an *implicit* Confidence, though they should not be able to account in particular for the Reason of what he Commands. And the same will be a sufficient satisfaction why they should obey him Universally, since every Precept either carries its own Evidence and Reason with it, or what

what is as good, an Inducement to Obedience, the undeceivable Reaſon of him that gives it. This is the Principle of *Believing* all that God *Reveals*, Myſteries as well as intelligible Articles, and the ſame is the Principle of Obeying all that God *Commands*. And wherever there is a clear Conviction of this, there *Obedience* muſt needs be as Univerſal as *Faith*, as having the ſame Grounds and Inducements: And there being no reaſon to queſtion but that there is the higheſt Conviction of this in the Minds of Angels, we may proceed to conſider,

Thirdly, With what *Conſtancy* they perform the Divine Will: They obey with Conſtancy, not only as 'tis oppoſed to final Ceſſation, but as 'tis oppoſed to the leaſt Interruption. The higheſt Perſeverance we can pretend to in this Region of Inconſtancy, is not to fall off totally or finally; nor are we ſure of ſo much as that. But to maintain a ſteddy Courſe of Obedience without the leaſt Interruption, is beyond the meaſures of Fleſh and Blood. But now the Holy Angels are not only ſecure from either total or final Apoſtacy, but even from the leaſt abatements or interruptions of Duty; for the Excellence which they Contemplate is always the ſame, and ſo alſo is the manner of their Contemplating it. They Contemplate the Face of God as the Philoſopher ſays of

the Supream Intelligences, Ἀεὶ καὶ ὡσαύτως *always and alike*, and consequently cannot but love and adore him with a constant and uninterrupted Flame of Devotion, the glorious Essence of God being the same to them that the common Nature of Good is to us, as was observed before: To which there is this further Advantage to be added, that their Understandings are never under an *Eclipse*, no not so much as in part; but as they always receive equal Illumination from God, so do they shine upon their Wills with an equal Light; and consequently they must needs stand always equally affected and disposed to what is good, as appearing to them always in a Light equally advantagious. For the variety and changableness of our Wills proceed from the variety of our Judgments; and were our Thoughts and Apprehensions of things always uniform, our Actions would be so too; for we always act as for that instant we think. This therefore being the happy condition of Angels, to have the Eye of their Understanding always equally awake, and in full Illumination, there must needs be also a constant Regularity in their Wills. The short is, as long as they Contemplate the Divine Essence, they cannot divert aside to any thing irregular, because of the Superlative Excellence of the Divine Good, which fills and wholly ingages the Faculties;

Faculties; and for the ſame reaſon they cannot chuſe but for ever to Contemplate. And herein I ſuppoſe muſt be placed that happy *Neceſſity* the Holy Angels are under, of doing the Will of God, and of perſevering in it to all Eternity; and that this is that which we mean, when we ſay they are *Confirmed* in good.

But leaving theſe Flaming Excellencies a while to their Happy and Noble Employments, before we go further, let us ſee how theſe Speculations may be improved to the benefit of our Practice: And Firſt, ſince God has made his Angels ſuch excellent and accompliſhed Creatures, let us make the ſame uſe of it that the Pſalmiſt did when he took from hence an occaſion of Praiſe and Thankſgiving, *Praiſe the Lord O my Soul*, ſays he, and then mentioning ſome Characters of his Greatneſs, he adds, *Pſal.* 104. 4. *He makes his Angels Spirits, and his Miniſters a flaming Fire.* Indeed the Angels are the greateſt *Occaſions* as well as *Inſtruments* of Praiſe, as being the Nobleſt part of the Divine Workmanſhip; *Eccl.* 43. 11. *Look upon the Rain-bow, and praiſe him that made it*, ſays the Son of *Sirach*: And if God is to be Praiſed for the Beauty of the Rain-bow, cauſed only by various Reflections and Refractions of the Globules of the Second Element in their paſſage through a Cloud, how much

more is he to be adored for these great Master-pieces of his Art, these Closet-Draughts of his Beauty!

Secondly, We may take a Caution hence to beware of that *Voluntary Humility* which the Apostle speaks of, and were he now alive, would have fresh Occasion given him to Condemn, in Worshipping Angels; take heed to thy self, lest when thou liftest up thine Eyes to Heaven, and seest the Sun, and the Moon, and the Stars, even all the Host of Heaven, thou shouldest be driven to worship them, says *Moses* to the People of *Israel*: Deut. 4. 19. And there is the same and greater danger here, when we Contemplate the Glory of this other Heavenly Host; for however through Envy or Emulation we usually lessen and disparage one anothers Excellencies, yet when we have to do with Creatures of another rank and order, we are apt to be guilty of the opposite extream, and to exchange *Detraction* for *Idolatry*.

Thirdly, We have here a most excellent Antidote against *Pride*, which is a littleness of Mind that arises from our Ignorance of the World about us as well as of our Selves; and consequently is best Cured by considering what Excellencies there are above us. The young Home-bred Heir that thinks his Father's Mannour a considerable part of the World,

World, is ſent abroad to ſee more of it, and returns Home Cured by his Travels. And would the Man that ſwells and looks big upon his Parts or Learning, but beſtow a Thought or Two upon the Perfections of *Angels*, I dare warrant him his Plumes will quickly fall, and that he will never find in his Heart to ſet up for a Wit more: For alas, what are we to the Angels? Hereafter indeed 'tis to be hoped, that ſome of us may be made like them; but what are we in Compariſon now? They excel us more than we do the Beaſts of the Field, and we need nothing elſe but this one Conſideration well thought upon to convince us, That *Pride was not made for Man.*

Fourthly, We may learn hence ſo to fear the Devil, as to look upon him as a conſiderable Adverſary, and not to be too ſecure in our beſt Condition; for he is an Angel ſtill, and we know not what he has loſt by his Fall, beſides that Grace and Goodneſs whereby he might be diſpoſed to help and befriend us. And the Apoſtle tells us, that we ſtill wreſtle againſt Principalities and Powers: And therefore it concerns us to provide our ſelves accordingly, and as he there adviſes, to take unto us *the whole Armour of God*, Epheſ. 4.

Laſtly, we ſhould endeavour to imitate all the Moral and Imitable Excellencies of

the good Angels; our Saviour has made them our Pattern in his *Prayer*, and we ſhould make them ſo in our *Lives*, by endeavouring to perform God's Will in Earth as it is in Heaven: Which calls upon me to return to the Fourth Enquiry, namely, How far we are concerned to imitate this Pattern of Obedience.

That our Imitation of it is in ſome Meaſure or other required, is moſt certain, otherwiſe our Lord would never have taught us to Pray that God's Will ſhould be done on Earth as it is in Heaven; but how far is the Queſtion? In anſwer to which, I obſerve that the Obedience of the Angels may be conſidered either Intenſively, or Extenſively; or in other Words, either with reſpect to the Act, or with reſpect to the Object; which laſt may again be meant either of the kinds of Good, or of the ſeveral degrees in each kind.

This being premiſed, I anſwer, Firſt, That we are not obliged to the *Intenſeneſs* of Angelical Obedience; this I ſay we are not obliged to, becauſe 'tis not among the τὰ ἐφ' ἡμῖν, the things which are in our Power. This indeed will be part of our *Reward* hereafter, but it cannot be our *Duty* here; and therefore though we are to obey God readily and chearfully, yet 'tis not required we

ſhould

ſhould do it with ſuch a degree of Alacrity as excludes all imperfect motions to the contrary. 'Tis not required while we are a Compound of Fleſh and Spirit, that the latter ſhould be wholly free from the Solicitations of the former; 'tis ſufficient if it have the *Caſting Voice*, and prevail in the Contention; and ſo much indeed is Duty. And therefore ſays the Pſalmiſt, *He that now goes on his way weeping, and beareth forth good Seed, ſhall doubtleſs come again with Joy, and bring his Sheaves with him*: Pſal. 126. He muſt bear forth good Seed, and if he does ſo, it ſhall be no Prejudice to him that he goes on his way weeping.

Neither are we obliged to ſerve God always with equal heights of Devotion, and and with an uniform fervency of Mind; for beſides that, our Saviour himſelf who led the moſt *Angelical* Life, pray'd at ſometimes *more earneſtly* than at others; this depends in a great meaſure upon the various junctures of Circumſtances, and the various Imperfections of Objects from without, and the different fineneſs and quickneſs of the Animal Spirits within, with many other Accidental Diſpoſitions which are not in our Power. We are only accountable for the Motions of our *Wills*; and for ebbs and flows of Paſſion no further than they are at the diſpoſal of the other; and therefore if we

Sail by a true Compaſs, and ſteer our Courſe to the right Point, we do our Duty, and are not Chargable for want of Guſty Blaſts, and Swelling Sails, which are not in our Power to have.

Then Secondly, as to the Extenſiveneſs of Angelical Obedience, if this be conſidered in the Firſt Senſe, with reſpect to the *kinds* of Good, we are certainly oblig'd to have our Obedience as Extenſive as theirs, being bound to obey the whole Will of God. For the ſincerity of our Obedience can no otherwiſe be juſtified than by its Univerſality and Uniformity; Uniformity as to the *Object*, though not as to the *Act*; and therefore 'tis that the Pſalmiſt Prays, *O that my Ways were ſo direct that I might keep thy Statutes*; Pſal. 119. ſo ſhall I not be confounded when I have reſpect unto all thy Commandments.

But if the Extenſiveneſs of Angelical Obedience be conſidered in the latter Senſe, with reſpect to the ſeveral *Degrees* in each kind of good, ſo we are not bound to come up to the Meaſures and Attainment of Angels, and that becauſe 'tis beyond the Capacity of our preſent Condition. Nay, I think we are not ſtrictly obliged under Pain of Sin, to attain to all the degrees of good which we poſſibly can, or always to do what is ſimply Beſt; for I think it plain from Scripture, that the Degrees of good admit of

Councel

Councel as well as Precept, and of Perfection as well as Duty: Much leſs therefore are we obliged to the full extenſiveneſs of *Angelical* Obedience as thus conſider'd: If we are not bound to *our* Beſt, much leſs to *their* Beſt.

But beſides this way of conſidering the Extenſiveneſs of the Angelical Obedience as to the kinds and degrees of Good, there is yet another, namely with reſpect to *Time* or *Continuance*; this is what we otherwiſe call their Perſeverance or Conſtancy of Obedience: Now as to the Meaſures of our Obligation to this we are to diſtinguiſh and conſider the Goſpel in a double Capacity, as a *Law*, and as a *Covenant*; if we conſider it as a Covenant, then we are not obliged to a conſtant and all the way a long continued Obedience. For 'tis not uninterrupted, but only final Perſeverance that is the condition of the Covenant. But if we conſider it as a Law, then we are not only obliged to a final, but to an uninterrupted Perſeverance, that is, we are not only required to be found at our laſt *Exit* in a ſtate of ſincere Obedience, (which is the Condition of the Covenant,) but alſo to continue all the way in it: For every deliberate and voluntary interruption of it is Sin, and ſuch as while unrepented of, will actually bring upon us Damnation.

Having thus in ſhort ſtated the general Meaſure of our Conformity to the Angelical Pattern

Pattern, which are also the Measures of our Evangelical Obedience, I come now lastly to consider how *Reasonable* it is that we should do thus; and certainly if any thing in the World be reasonable, 'tis that we should do the Will of God; for the *Will* of God is the *highest Reason*. Indeed were God an Arbitrary Humorsom Being, that loved to domineer over his Creatures, and to impose on them harsh and troublesom Commands only for his own Pleasure, and to shew his Authority; though even then we should justly owe him Homage and Obedience, yet there might be some pretence for disputing it, and making demurs about it. But God is so good and kind as to enjoyn us nothing but what is pursuant of the End for which he Created us; that is, our Happiness and Perfection: So kind as to link our Duty and Interest together, and to make those very things the Instances of our Obedience, which are the natural Means, and necessary Causes of our Happiness: So that were we to contrive a way to make our Condition Happy, we could pitch upon no better than what he has already prescribed to us in the Laws which he has given us. So highly consonant and *agreeable* are they to the frame of our Natures, and so absolutely *necessary* are they both to the order of this present World, and to the Happiness of the next.

next. This might eaſily be demonſtrated of every one of the Divine Commandments in particular; but that being too long an Undertaking for the cloſe of a Diſcourſe, I only conſider that we have a certain ground to conclude what the Will of God muſt be in reference to us, by what he is in himſelf; for this is an evident Principle, That ſuch as God himſelf is, ſuch muſt be his Will, it being unconceivable that he ſhould will any thing contrary to his Nature. But now we all take God to be a Being Eſſentially and Immutably Wiſe and Good, Holy, Juſt and True; and if theſe are Properties inſeparable from the Nature of God, (as all grant they are,) then the Will of God muſt alſo be Holy, Wiſe, Juſt, True and Good, and conſequently highly fit and reaſonable to be Obeyed.

But why O God do we want *Reaſon* to perſwade us to do thy Will? Is it not enough that it is *Thine*? *Thine* who art the great Creator and Governour of the World, and haſt the higheſt right to be ſerved by all the *Creatures*, and by all the *Powers* which thou haſt made? *Thine*, who art the beſt and greateſt Being, who art infinitely Wiſe, Holy, Juſt and True, and canſt therefore command nothing but what is ſo? *Thine*, who art above all capacity of addition to thy Happineſs, and canſt therefore propoſe no good

but

but that of thy Creatures in the Laws that thou giveſt them? Why then do we inquire after the Reaſon of thy Will? It ought to ſatisfy us that it is *Thine.*

And ſince this Will of God is done in Heaven, why ſhould it not be done on Earth? Since the Bleſſed Angels who can diſcern the Reaſons of things, even the *deep things* of God, and are infinitely better able to judge of the Reaſonableneſs of Obedience then we are; ſince *they* are ſo ready and forward to pay it, why ſhould *we* make any Queſtion or any Delay about it? Since the great Heavenly Hoſt, thoſe Excellent Beings that excel both in Wiſdom and Strength, acknowledge and ſubmit to the Government of God, why ſhould we a little handful of Rebels, ſtand out? Since the Will of God is done in *Heaven*, why is it not on *Earth?* Yes, it is done on Earth, for at his Commandment the Waters flow, and the Wind and Storm fulfil his Word; only Man, diſorderly Man, will not be Obedient, though he has a *God* for his Maker, and *Angels* for his *Preſident.*

But let as many of us as hope to be like Angels hereafter, ſtudy to be like them here; let us ſeriouſly and diligently endeavour to write after ſo fair a Copy, and ſet before us the holy Angels as *Patterns*, as well as *Obſervers*, in all our Actions, which would certainly work more upon us, than

that

that Expedient so much advised by a great Man, the imaginary presence of a *Cato* or a *Lælius*. Let us make it our care as much as in us lies, by the *Angelical* Piety and Regularity of our Lives, to restore the Moral World to that Symphony and Uniform Harmony wherein God made it, and not only *Pray*, but also heartily *Endeavour* that the Will of the great God may be done here on Earth as it is in Heaven.

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